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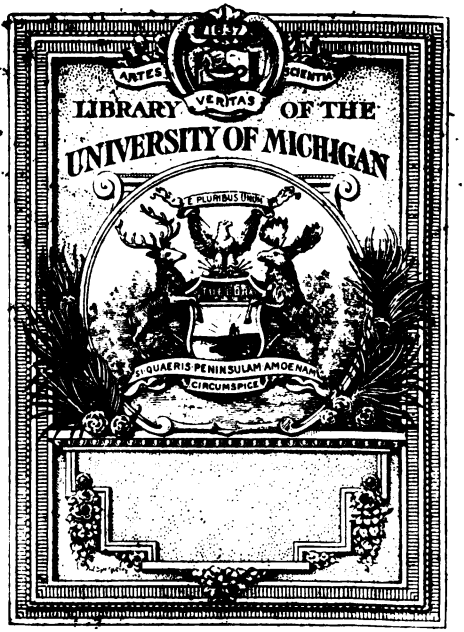
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WHAT THINK YE OF THE CHRIST?

WHAT THINK YE OF THE CHRIST?

BY

SAMUEL CLIFFORD.

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1883

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20 May 19. EHN.

PREFACE.

THERE are two extremes of opinion relative to the descent of Jesus of Nazareth, which indicate two opposite poles of thought on the subject of Supernatural Religion.

According to one extreme, that of orthodox Christianity as expressed in the Nicene Creed, Jesus was "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father: by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

While according to the other extreme, the chief apostle of which is the German naturalist, Ernst Haeckel (and which points straight to Atheism), the "Son of Man," far from being exclusively entitled to

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claim such exalted parentage as is accorded him by the creeds, might not even call on mankind to join him in addressing "Our Father"; and if he asked in the words of the prophet, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" could only have been answered truly in the negative; for that he also was descended literally from a worm of the earth, the said worm having been "not made, nor created, but begotten," and that too by an animal still lower in the scale of life, whose first animate progenitor owed its existence to a process of spontaneous generation.

Moreover, that this genesis occurred without the consent of any supernatural being or beings, for as yet, according to Haeckel, there was none of them, neither in fact nor in fancy.

The present writer regards neither of the above theories of the descent of the prophet of Galilee as proven, and thinks himself justified in assuming that many other persons are thus far in agreement with him, who are, however, also uncertain what to think or believe respecting Jesus and Christianity (having become unsettled by the progress of free thought), yet who, desirous of truth, would welcome a volume from whatever quarter, which should enable them to substitute some definite conclusions for their present doubts and surmises.

If he is correct in these assumptions, a book on the subject of the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to

Christianity must be a *desideratum*, provided it enabled the average reader, without much exertion, to attain to a right understanding as to the origin and meaning of Christianity.

The last notable work written to enable laymen to judge for themselves whether or not Christianity had a supernatural origin—the book entitled "Supernatural Religion"—though it has never been fairly answered, has failed, perhaps, to convince the majority of readers; at any rate, the religious world moves on with little alteration.

The work in question labours hard, for instance, to induce the reader to fix on an extremely late date for the origin of each of the gospels, although it is easy for writers of the opposite camp to show in each case that a much earlier date is more probably correct.

Thus the work is discredited through the extreme nature of the critical views enunciated.

The attitude of many modern apologists, and that of great numbers of Christians not of the narrowest types, towards the gospel miracles, and the evidence required for them, is sometimes that taken by Mr. Sanday, who, after some concessions, says, "But that miracles, or what we call such, did in some shape take place is, I believe, simply a matter of attested fact. When we consider it in relation to the rest of the narrative, to tear out the miraculous bodily from the Gospels seems to me, in the first instance,

a violation of history and criticism rather than of faith." *

Sometimes the miracles are pleaded for, as by Dr. Farrar, who lets them readily go, knowing that a single revolution of the circle of his reasoning will bring them back. Thus, he says, "To the belief of Christendom the Son of God would still be the Son of God, even if, like John, he had done no miracle."

Again, "One whose very existence was the highest miracle of all. For our faith is that he was sinless."

". . . The fulfilment of the moral law without us in the Person of Jesus Christ. That fulfilment makes us believe that He was indeed Divine ; and if He were Divine, we have no further astonishment left when we are taught that he did on earth that which can be done by the power of God alone." †

It may be, however, that the strict path of historical inquiry will lead to quite other conclusions respecting the supernatural origin of Christianity; that the Jesus presented to us (in the first Gospel, for instance), can be best understood and realized on the hypothesis of his being merely a natural man of great religious genius indeed, but one who was *not* in any way supernaturally gifted. The "internal evidence"

* "The Gospels in the Second Century," by W. Sanday, M.A., p. 8 of the Introd. Chap. Macmillan, 1876.

† "Life of Christ," eighth edition, 1874, pp. 167, 170, 171.

of the superhuman may, perhaps more easily than even the external, be shown to exist only in the "Christian consciousness."

The present volume is the first portion of "An Inquiry Concerning the Origin and Meaning of Christianity," and contains about one-fifth of the whole. If favourably received, it is intended immediately to issue the remainder in two volumes.

At the close of this introductory volume is appended an outline of the contents of the whole work, so that those who cannot obtain the remaining volumes may nevertheless have an epitome thereof. Others it will enable in some degree to judge whether or not the entire book will repay perusal and study.

The reader, whether Christian or non-Christian, is invited to begin the inquiry from a neutral standpoint, such as the writer occupies in his first chapter.

Whatever may be the defects of the work, and they are doubtless numerous, the reader of average intelligence will be enabled to decide for himself, from the ample material placed before him, on the claim of Christianity to be considered a Divine Revelation.

"As for the truth, it endureth and will always stand. It liveth and conquereth for evermore."

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

S. C.

July, 1883.

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WHAT THINK YE OF THE CHRIST?

CHAPTER I.

REPRESENTING VARIOUS BELIEFS AND OPINIONS RESPECTING JESUS OF NAZARETH.

IN days of old, when kings were elected and held in reverence for their personal prowess, or even for the majesty of their outward appearance, when "men were famous according as they had lifted up axes upon the thick trees,"—then, in the land of Israel, the question "What think ye of the Christ?"—of the Anointed of Jahveh, by him chosen to be your king?—would probably have elicited praises unstinted of the majesty, strength, and beauty of Saul, head and shoulders taller than his former peers; or of David, the well-favoured youth of ruddy countenance.

But, to come down to later ages, "Jesus, who is called Christ," has been believed, in accordance with prophecy(?), to have been "without form or comeliness." To the painter, however, this opinion is a heresy, and one which his art has well-nigh exterminated by pre-

senting an ideal countenance whose lineaments might be termed handsome, replete as they are with suggestions of majesty, goodness, and grace, if they did not also betoken sadness; and yet, does he not sometimes depict a "sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self?" For the painter, with like instinct to the poet, believes "all that's good is beautiful and fair," and will quote Spenser to the effect that—

> "Every spirit, as it is most pure,
> And hath in it the more of heavenly light,
> So it the fairer body doth procure
> To habit in, and it more fairly dight
> With cheerful grace, and amiable sight;
> For of the soul the body form doth take,
> For soul is form, and doth the body make."

The man of science also, often regarding Jesus as simply a natural man, of sound mind in healthful body, will readily concede to him that manly beauty which is the necessary concomitant of such attributes.

> "Manly yet womanly."
>
> ". . . that youth with the dark azure eyes,
> And hair in colour like unto the wine;
> Parted upon his forehead, and behind
> Falling in flowing locks."
>
> "How serene his aspect is!"
>
> "Most beautiful among the sons of men."*

We have remarked a difference in the opinions

* Longfellow's "Divine Tragedy." The source of the description is a forged letter alleged to have been addressed to the Roman Senate. See Lecky's "History of Rationalism in Europe," vol. i. p. 234, 235.

entertained respecting even the form and features of Jesus of Nazareth, but what are the variations in these, compared with the many shades of belief existing in regard to other symbols of his inner and more essential being—his rank in the universe, his acts, his teaching, and whatever else is illustrative of his moral attributes or character?

During his lifetime, and in the ages immediately succeeding, the judgments concerning him were as various as in modern times. He was, on the one hand, accounted "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber;" a law-breaker and mover of sedition; a blasphemer (word often ignorantly pronounced); a corrupter of morals and religion (as Socrates); and, as also in the case of the Grecian sage, it was easy to raise against him the cry "He deceiveth the people!" "Away with him!" "Not fit to live!"

And even the relatives of Jesus are recorded to have pronounced upon him a verdict of insanity, "for they said, He is beside himself."* His opponents accused him of exercising authority over evil spirits by a secret understanding with their chief; and, at a later period, by Jewish and heathen antagonists of his fame, he was accounted a sorcerer, an adept in magical arts and incantations.

Turning to the fairer side of the picture, we find it said of him that he was "a good man," one "who did

* Mark iii. 21. We may remark that every express quotation made herein from the New Testament, *i.e.* where chapter and verse are indicated, is from the Revised Version, unless stated to be otherwise.

no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" he was "perfect through sufferings." We are told that "He went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil, for God was with him." He was termed "the Holy One and the Just;" and whereas it had been objected against him, in his life-time, that he was "a friend of publicans and sinners," this very imputation was regarded, after his death, as his chief glory, seeing that he came "to seek and save the lost," that he so loved sinners as to die to save them from their sins, hence arose the cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." He was accounted "a man approved of God by powers and wonders and signs;" "Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee." It is said that he was believed to be "John the Baptist risen from the dead," or, by others, one of the ancient prophets revisiting the earth.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." "He is Lord of all." "Lord of lords, and King of kings." "For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." "And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." For at the end, he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, after the final judgment of men. "For we shall all

stand before the judgment seat of Christ." "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." But it is, moreover, asserted of him,* that he is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him, and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." And again, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Nor is this all, for we find in the fourth Gospel Divinity itself, in a sense, ascribed to the Nazarene, thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." We also find that the exclamation, "My Lord and my God!" is affirmed to have been uttered by the hitherto incredulous disciple Thomas, about eight days after the resurrection.

Some three centuries after his death, the Church, by her representatives assembled at Nicæa, succeeded in stating in what sense she affirmed Godhood of Jesus, and what, in the main, was her belief concerning him. Thus—

"I believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of

* Col. i. 15–17.

God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father: by whom all things were made, who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end."

Thus we see it was affirmed of Jesus—1st. That he was the only-begotten Son of God. 2nd. That he was God. 3rd. That he, God, became man. Are we, then, to understand that the Church, in the Nicene Creed, affirms "the conversion of the Godhead into flesh," into manhood? No; to prevent this, and other misconceptions, she has promulgated another creed still more strictly defining the nature of Jesus. So we find, in the series of propositions "commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius," the following respecting Jesus:—

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the Worlds; and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood. Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ."

These beliefs are still confessed by the vast majority of Christians, but they do not command universal assent.

Many of those who, while admitting the authority of the New Testament, reject that of the Church, prefer to express their belief concerning their Galilean King in the language of the New Testament, and while confessing faith in his Divinity and in his birth from a virgin, think it safer to affirm, instead of either the Nicene or Athanasian propositions, that "Our Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of Man and the Son of God." Passing over the Arian and other controversies of the early Church, we come down to heretical Christians of the present day, who, while still holding that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," reject the doctrine of his Godhead, and usually term themselves "Unitarians," many of them adding "of the old school." Of these there are probably few who still admit the doctrine of the Incarnation, and the Arianism of Milton and Channing. "Milton taught," says Dr. Channing, 1825, "that the Son of God is a distinct being from God, and inferior to him, that he existed before the world was made, that he is the first of the creation of God, and that afterwards all other things were made by him, as the instrument or minister of his Father."

But most of the "old school Unitarians," together with a sprinkling of persons frequenting the places of worship of other denominations—and in America, France, Germany, and Holland, in some cases forming

the majority—believe Jesus to have been "simply and truly a human being," and they avoid some scriptural expressions concerning him as misleading.

"Who, then," asks the Swedenborgian, "was that dread, mysterious one that walked the earth more than eighteen centuries since, and whose appearance was the signal for a contest of opinions which has widened and extended to our own day?" And, speaking in the name of the New Church, he replies to his own query—"Without hesitation or ambiguity, He was God manifest in the flesh. We have no knowledge or conception of any other; we worship no other; we pray to no other for his sake." Thus they say, "Jesus is Jehovah," and worship "Jesus only." He is to them not merely "the Second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity," but the Trinity entire.

Amid all this variety and conflict of opinion and belief respecting the Nazarene, to which side shall we incline? Or shall we bow down before an image, intended to represent his "virgin mother," and, addressing her as "Mother of God," ask her to influence her Son in our behalf? And shall we also reverently regard as his "vicegerent on earth," the present excellent occupier of the Vatican, or his successor good or bad? No; it is difficult in these days to ask such questions seriously, and we thus summarily dismiss them from our consideration.

Having sufficiently heard the Church, let us turn to the masses of our countrymen, or their kinsmen

assembled here or across the Atlantic to hear an evangelical preacher, and let us listen as they sing:

> "Jesus, the Name high over all,
> In hell, or earth, or sky,"

and remember that a modern thinker and writer no more fanatical than John Stuart Mill did not hesitate to pronounce Jesus higher in moral character than the Being who, presumably, created this world. If Mr. Moody happens to be the preacher, we may perchance hear a solo from his companion, Mr. Ira D. Sankey; let us again listen:

> "Sweetest note in seraph song,
> Sweetest name on mortal tongue,
> Sweetest carol ever sung,
> Jesus, blessed Jesus."

Of the early Christian heresies respecting Jesus, one there is which, though now extinct in Christendom, has yet survived *outside* its borders, viz. in Mohammedanism, for the Koran states that Jesus was not crucified, but that God, being "the best of those that devise stratagems," caused one of the enemies of Jesus to assume his appearance, and be crucified in his stead, taking Jesus up into heaven. It is often forgotten that the Mohammedans believe with Christians that Jesus was truly the Messiah, the Word of God. "For," says the Koran (Sale's translation), "when God decreeth a thing that he desires to bring into existence he only saith unto it Be, and it is, and thus he created Jesus the son of Mary without a father." Hence, the "Word." The vital difference between

Christian and Moslem is, that the latter believes the connection of Jesus with the world is severed, that he no longer exercises his spiritual dominion by his own will, nor by the will of God, having been superseded by Mohammed.

Leaving now those who confess their faith by squadrons, according to the belief in which they have been brought up, let us note a few singularities of opinion, uttered by persons who do not so "readily range themselves under 'isms."

It has been said that the species of angels are innumerable, each individual constituting a distinct species; it has also been alleged against free inquiry that its tendency is so decidedly towards variety of opinion that in the end it may be expected there will be as many distinct beliefs, as there are persons to hold them, so that, as with the angels, each man will have to be placed in a category by himself.

But in respect of any further comparison with angels, there are multitudes who regard it as holding good only if the angels are such as issue from below, even as that "Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ," entitled "Ecce Homo," was compared to something foul vomited from the infernal pit. This, however, though uttered by a man whose goodness is deservedly honoured, is the language of excessive bigotry, inasmuch as the author of the work referred to was distinctly within the Christian pale, while some of those whose views we shall notice will not claim to be so regarded. Such narrowness as we

have mentioned is (at least, among Protestants) rapidly becoming a thing of the past, and the high moral and intellectual qualities of many, who in belief are, like Goethe, "decidedly non-Christian," are freely admitted by the chief defenders of orthodox beliefs. For example, Dr. Farrar, in the twelfth page of his preface to the eighth edition of "The Life of Christ," says, "I hope to use no single word of anger or denunciation against a scepticism which I know to be in many cases perfectly honest and self-sacrificingly noble." And as to intellectual eminence, he writes as if unquestionably the men of greatest mental power in the present age were unbelievers in the supernatural elements of Christianity, for he deprecates the opinion that a belief in the New Testament as it is cannot be entertained in the present day by a man of the higher order of intellect.

And it is scarcely surprising that he should have fears for the intellectual status that will be conceded to orthodox believers, since the modern advocate of orthodoxy finds himself opposed on an important historical problem by the chief modern historians; on questions of Biblical criticism by the greatest Biblical critics; and on the question of the inviolability of the order of nature by the most eminent men of science; —our Newtons and Faradays having been succeeded by men who rarely avow belief in the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels.

This is perhaps the fittest place in which to introduce a passage from Dr. Cunningham Geikie's

"Life and Words of Christ" (pp. 1–3), showing the reverence with which certain great men of the past regarded Jesus, being, too, mostly men of free thought. "We all know," Dr. Geikie says, "how lowly a reverence is paid to him in passage after passage by Shakespeare, the greatest intellect known, in its wide, many-sided splendour. Men like Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, and Milton set the name of Jesus Christ above every other. To show that no other subject of study can claim an equal interest, Jean Paul Richter tells us that 'the life of Christ concerns him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted with his pierced hand empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.' Spinoza calls Christ the symbol of Divine Wisdom; Kant and Jacobi hold him up as the symbol of ideal perfection, and Schelling and Hegel as that of the union of the Divine and the human. 'I esteem the Gospels,' says Goethe, 'to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so divine a kind as only the Divine could ever have manifested upon earth.' 'How petty are the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp,' says Rousseau, 'compared with the Gospels!"

"'Jesus Christ,' says the exquisite genius Herder, 'is, in the noblest and most perfect sense, the realized ideal of humanity.'"

Thus we see that even to those who reject entirely

his supernatural character, and care not to claim the appellation Christian (as *e.g.* Goethe)—even to these, with few exceptions, Jesus Christ is the "Best and Greatest" of mankind. There are, indeed, forming an intermediate class containing many names of eminence, those who still "profess and call themselves Christians," while avowing their disbelief that Jesus fulfilled the conditions requisite to constitute him the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy; who cannot admit that he wrought any miracle, nor believe in his bodily resurrection from the dead, yet state their belief that he lived a life perfectly sinless, even during the period of youth. The late George Dawson (*e.g.*) takes his place here, and one of the most recent biographers of Jesus—the late Dr. Theodore Keim—seems to be of this class. He says,* "This true and living image of the human Christ can never again be reconciled with its directly mysterious and superhuman attributes;" and on p. 15, "For ourselves, no conviction has become more certain, in the contemplation of this life, than that there where dwelt the truest and noblest humanity, not only a religious genius, but a miracle of God and his presence on earth, was at the same time revealed; himself the person and in no other sense the miracle, the human nature allied with the divine, the corporeal temple of God. That the religious genius will not suffice is most clearly shown by this, that the manner in which Jesus is singled

* "Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. p. 14. Theological Translation Fund Library: Williams and Norgate.

out and distinguished from all others as the sinless one, does not belong to the conception of a genius, in which there is a relative and no absolute greatness. With this sinlessness not merely the dogmatic, but also the historical Jesus must stand or fall."

And in vol. ii. p. 67 Keim further says, "We may hazard the conclusion . . . that the tireless wrestling of God after a representation of a perfect, yes, a godlike being, a beloved Godlike image in earthly form" . . . has "been crowned with a success worthy of God . . . in the person of Jesus himself."

A belief mainly similar to the above has been defended by Dr. Martineau, and is held by many Unitarians; see, for example, "The Soul's Way to God," by Rev. Charles Beard, pp. 30, 31. This work is published by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; and from another publication of the same society, "Conscience and Faith," a translation from the French of the late Athanase Coquerel *Fils*, a noted liberal Protestant, we extract the following, see p. 110:—"When I read again and again his sublime and powerful words, I mark his vast immeasurable superiority to all that surrounded him: to the Jews of his age, to the sages of Greece, to the Roman masters of the world, to his own disciples—even the greatest of them, St. John and St. Paul—to all his successors, even the most eminent and most saintly. I find him so superior to modern wisdom, to the morality of our time, to existing religious systems, including those which take their origin from him; I see him so closely

and so really in union with God ; I see him so great, so simple, so good, so pure, so human, that it pains me to hear him called my equal or yours, and I recognize in him with rapture the Head and Master of humanity, the Redeemer or Liberator, the Elder Brother, the King of men, the Son of God *par excellence.* I cannot help admitting that, while still most truly man, he is as perfectly divine as it is possible to be on earth, and infinitely beyond anything we could ever have imagined."

To Dr. S. Davidson, also, Jesus is "a person such as the world never saw before—the living type of an ideal humanity, pure and perfect."*

Lastly, we presume that the Rev. Stopford Brooke also belongs to the same class—of those, namely, who have ceased to affirm the physically miraculous, yet who regard Jesus as possessing a really supernatural elevation of character.

Descending from these altitudes, we come to many persons who do not commit themselves to an expression of belief in the absolute sinlessness of Jesus throughout his whole career, yet who employ superlatives in stating his relative height as a man.

The author of the well-known work, "Supernatural Religion," says, in effect, that Jesus never has been and never can be surpassed, while hitherto he has excelled all others.† Thus: "The teaching of Jesus carried morality to the sublimest point attained or

* Introduction to "Study of New Testament," p. 463.

† See vol. ii. p. 487.

even attainable by humanity. The influence of his spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of his character. Surpassing in his sublime simplicity and earnestness, the moral grandeur of Chakya-Mouni, and putting to the blush the sometimes sullied, though generally admirable, teaching of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, he presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, so that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence." And in p. 489 this author remarks of the teaching of Jesus, "It is too divine in its morality to require the aid of miraculous attributes. No supernatural halo can heighten its spiritual beauty, and no mysticism deepen its holiness. In its perfect simplicity it is sublime, and in its profound wisdom it is eternal."

Mr. Matthew Arnold views him who preached from the Galilean Mount as "the Only;" for he tells us that "Nothing is righteousness but the method and secret and sweet reasonableness of Jesus Christ." *

Sometimes, in estimating the qualities of Jesus, superlatives are employed only in reference to other great ones of the past and present, and without pronouncing on the future. Thus, the hero of "Sartor Resartus," and vehicle of Carlyle's utterances therein,

* "God and the Bible," p. 9.

says (p. 243), "Look on our divinest symbol: on Jesus of Nazareth, and his life, and his biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached: this is Christianity and Christendom; a symbol of quite perennial infinite character, whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest."

Mr. J. A. Froude also says, "The most perfect being who ever trod the soil of this planet was called 'the Man of Sorrows.'" *

Miss F. P. Cobbe, too, speaks of "The virtuous life and martyr-death of Christ—the most perfect of sacrifices ever made by man." †

A "Beneficed Clergyman of the Church of England," who thinks that if that Church wishes to continue long in existence she must completely abandon her dogmas and traditions, and whom therefore we class with the opponents of the miraculous, speaks, in p. 36, of a tractate entitled the "Gospel of the Kingdom," of "the religious consciousness of Jesus as the highest form of spiritual apprehension, the moral teaching of Jesus as the most perfect rule of life and conduct, and the example of Jesus as the purest type of active and disinterested goodness hitherto presented to the progressive imitation of mankind."

Mr. K. Chunder Sen, without comparing Jesus with any other, says of him, "The complete abnega-

* From article "Calvinism," in the second series of "Short Studies on Great Subjects," p. 45.

† "Religious Duty," p. 320.

tion of self he taught and lived, for the glory of God's name and the salvation of mankind. He wholly surrendered himself to God, and dedicated his will to the Divine." *

The late Thomas Scott, in his "English Life of Jesus," after condemning each of the Gospels as either wholly or partly unhistorical, says in conclusion (pp. 348, 349), "Our aim has been simply to test the historical character of the Gospel narratives, and the process has drawn out the image of one, of the facts of whose life we know indeed but little, but who stands out in himself pure, loving, gentle, and merciful to all men. We see before us one who embraced all the suffering and heavy-laden in the wide circle of his love, and who spoke of his mission specially as a charge to seek out and save that which was lost."

The late John Stuart Mill, towards the close of the posthumous volume "Essays on Religion," though, as might have been expected, he uses a qualifying "perhaps," yet testifies to the nobility of the character of Jesus. Speaking of the Jesus of the Synoptics, he says, "Who among his disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?" Mill attributes to him "profundity of insight," and places "the prophet of Nazareth . . . in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities

* "Inspiration," p. 20. An Anniversary Lecture: Calcutta, 1873.

of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon earth . . . it remains a possibility that Christ actually was what he supposed himself to be—not God, for he never made the smallest pretension to that character, and would probably have thought such a pretension as blasphemous as it seemed to the men who condemned him; but a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue."

M. Ernest Renan's Portrait of Jesus presents greater alternations of light and shade. He tells us, at the conclusion of his book, "Jesus is the highest of those pillars which show to man whence he comes, and whither he ought to tend. In him was condensed all that is good and elevated in our nature." But "He was not sinless . . . it is probable that many of his faults have been concealed." Still, "there never was a man, Chakya-Mouni perhaps excepted, who has to this degree trampled underfoot family, the joys of this world, and all temporal care. . . . Whatever may be the unexpected phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed . . . all the ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, there is none born who is greater than Jesus."

We have taken note of a confession of faith in Jesus to the effect that his greatness is unsurpassable, that "the tireless wrestling of God" after a perfect man has in him been successful.

We are now to notice and record some expressions

of an opinion not exactly coinciding with this, and in some respects decidedly the opposite thereof—pausing just an instant to remind those who need the reminder that Professor Huxley has not withheld his tribute, since, quoting the two great commands in which "the law and the prophets" are epitomized, he terms them "That Noble Summary of the whole duty of man." *

The late Ralph Waldo Emerson, while affirming that only the genius speaks from himself, and that "that sublime spirit" "Jesus always speaks from within, and in a degree that transcends all others," distinctly records a belief in his imperfection, and his looking for the appearing of a greater than he—a complete man. "Jesus," says Emerson, in his Essay on History, "astonishes and overpowers sensual people. They cannot unite him to history or reconcile him with themselves. As they come to revere their intuitions, and aspire to live holily, their own piety explains every fact, every word." Jesus, therefore, was to Emerson "conceivably great, not inconceivably." "The saints and demi-gods whom history worships we are constrained to accept with a grain of allowance." "Before the immense possibilities of man, all mere experience, all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away" (Essay on the Over Soul). Shakespeare is greater in mental power; both Jesus and he looked on the universe of Nature and Man with results opposite in the extreme. "It must be conceded," says "the wise American," at close

* See *Contemporary Review*, November, 1871.

of his Lecture on Shakespeare (see "Representative Men"), "that these are but half views of half men. The world still wants its poet-priest, a reconciler . . . for love is compatible with universal wisdom." In this essay on Shakespeare, Jesus is not, it is true, mentioned by name, only alluded to as an Israelite.

But in his "Song of Nature," Emerson unmistakably expresses the sentiments we have attributed to him, in respect to the relative greatness of Jesus. Thus:—

"Still the man-child is not born,
The summit of the whole.

. . . . .

I travail in pain for him,
My creatures travail and wait;
His couriers come by squadrons,
He comes not to the gate.

"Twice I have moulded an image,
And thrice outstretched my hand:

. . . . .

One in a Judæan manger,
And one by Avon stream,
One over against the mouths of Nile,
And one in the academe.

. . . . .

"But fell the starry influence short,
The cup was never full."

Yet, sooner or later, he that shall come, will come.

"The sunburnt world a man shall breed
Of all the zones, and countless days."

For—

"No ray is dimmed, no atom worn,
My oldest force is good as new;

And the fresh rose on yonder thorn
Gives back the bending heavens in dew."

Theodore Parker attributes to Jesus some degree of moral as well as intellectual imperfection, while showing, however, a warm and sympathetic appreciation of him as a great and good Being, a living and true Man. But he, too, shall speak for himself (see works edited by F. P. Cobbe, vol. i. p. 165). "Jesus, a young man full of genius for Religion." On p. 193, "Sometimes he is said to be an enthusiast who hoped to found a visible kingdom in Judæa by miraculous aid. . . . Even if the fact be admitted, as I think it must be, . . . his honesty, zeal, self-sacrifice, heavenly piety still shine out in the whole course of his life." On pages 195, 196, "Jesus . . . in this nation of forms . . . falls back upon simple Morality, simple Religion, united in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages; rises free from so many prejudices of his age, nation, or sect; gives free range to the spirit of God in his breast; sets aside the law, sacred and time-honoured as it was, its forms, its sacrifice, its temple, and its priest; puts away the Doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable; and pours out doctrines, beautiful as the light, sublime as Heaven, and true as God. The philosophers, the poets, the prophets, the Rabbis,—he rises above them all. Yet Nazareth was no Athens, where philosophy breathed in the circumambient air; it had neither porch nor lyceum, not even a school of the prophets.

Doubtless he had his errors, his follies, faults, and sins even; it is idle and absurd to deny it." On p. 200 we meet with the following hearty tribute :—

"Serene in awful loveliness . . . a Man of the highest type. Blessed be God that so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the human world. It bids us take courage and be glad, for what man has done he may do; yea, more.

"'Jesus, there is no dearer name than thine,
Which time has blazoned on his mighty scroll;
No wreaths or garlands ever did entwine
So fair a temple of so vast a soul.
There every virtue set his triumph-seal;
Wisdom conjoined with strength and radiant grace
In a sweet copy Heaven to reveal,
And stamp perfection on a mortal face
Once on the earth wert thou, before men's eyes,
That did not half thy beauteous brightness see,
Even as the emmet does not read the skies,
Nor our weak orbs look thro' immensity.
Once on the earth wert thou, a living shrine,
Wherein conjoining dwelt the Good, the Lovely, the Divine.'

"Here was the greatest soul of the sons of men; a man of genius for religion; one before whom the majestic mind of Grecian sages and of Hebrew seers must veil its face."

Professor F. W. Newman's estimate of Jesus is far lower than any we have yet quoted. He ranks him, it is true, among the "kindling souls," to be "named with special honour," but quotes a sentence from the

Quarterly Review respecting Madame Roland ("To say that she was without fault would be to say that she was not human"), as expressing or implying his own strong conviction of the moral frailty of every human being. Were a biographer to write a life of Jesus or of any man, in which no defect of moral character could be discerned, he would, nevertheless, believe that, being simply a man, he must be "frail and imperfect." But in regard to Jesus, Mr. Newman says,* "I have given . . . indications of points in which the conduct of Jesus does not seem to me to have been that of a perfect man: how any one can think him a universal model is to me still less intelligible."

In a tract on the "True Temptation of Jesus," he says, after allowing for exaggeration in the Gospel narratives, "it comes before me as certain fact, that the true temptation of Jesus was the whisper made to him, '*Are you not possibly the Messiah?*' and by it the legendary devil overcame him."

And in respect of the relative moral position of Jesus, he says (or said in 1853), at the conclusion of the chapter above alluded to in "Phases of Faith," "in *consistency* of goodness Jesus fell far below vast numbers of his unhonoured disciples."

The Jesus of Professor Newman is, perhaps, morally comparable to the "Savonarola" of George Eliot.

Strauss, in his "Life of Jesus for the People,"

* "Phases of Faith," second edition, chapter on "Moral Perfection of Jesus."

while admitting that the Nazarene had a "harmonious mental constitution," yet does not hesitate to pronounce him an arrant enthusiast, "a fanatic, and not a common one either," *if* he ever expected a second advent, and this he leaves in some doubt; but he, too, had better speak for himself: "Jesus," says he,* "appears as a beautiful nature from the first, which had only to develop itself out of itself to become more clearly conscious of itself, ever firmer in itself, but not to change and begin a new life; a condition which naturally does not exclude individual uncertainties and errors, the necessity of a constant serious effort to overcome self and deny self, as Jesus acknowledged by disclaiming, as has been stated above, the predicate of 'good' attributed to him. For the different, or rather the evasive form in which this speech is represented in Matt. xix. 17, is certainly a later alteration."

And again he says, "he who expects to come again after his death, as no human being ever has done, is, in our opinion, not exactly a madman, because in reference to the future imagination is more possible, but still an arrant enthusiast." "Nor should it be said that a fanatic would not have produced the historical effects which Jesus did produce; would not have had the sound and lofty views which, up to this point, have been analyzed. This may be true of an impostor, and this character, therefore, we leave entirely out of the question. But it is no unusual phenomenon to see high spiritual gifts and moral

* Authorized Translation: William and Norgate, p. 283.

endowments tempered with an ingredient of enthusiasm ; and of the great men of history it might even be absolutely maintained that not one of them would have existed without enthusiasm" (pp. 323, 324).

We are not acquainted with the works of any writer of the present day who does not account Jesus of Nazareth at least a good and great man. We know not one who would now speak of him in terms of pure censure or contempt. "Perhaps Voltaire," says Emerson, "was not bad-hearted, yet he said of the good Jesus even, 'I pray you, let me never hear that man's name again.'" And if we go back to that last century, and cross the Channel, we may also chance to hear the Galilean termed an impostor. We believe it was Volney who wrote of "The three Impostors—Moses, Mohammed, and Christ." All that, we may well believe, is finally got rid of.*

And it will be well, perhaps, to terminate here our cursory survey of opinions relative to the Prophet

* We mean among respectable British writers at least, to whom the only alternatives are—either Jesus was, *at lowest*, a great and good man, or he was a person whose life was so enshrouded in fable that we have no right to form any opinion respecting him. It appears, however, that if we descend low enough we shall alight on expressions of opinion utterly hostile to the fame of the Nazarene, for since writing the above we have met with the following, bearing no earlier date than 1866 :—"Never since he ascended to his throne was he the object of a more passionate adoration than now ; never did he encounter the glare of a hatred more intense, and more defiant ; and between these, the poles of a contemplation incessantly directed upon his person, there are shades and levels of thought and feeling, many and graduated, here detracting from the highest expressions of faith, there shrinking from the most violent extremities of blasphemy."—"Divinity of our Lord," etc., by H. P. Liddon, M.A., p. 17.

of Galilee, since we do not see our way to the decision of any doubtful point respecting either the moral or intellectual rank of Jesus or the supernatural position claimed for him by the method of counting votes, nor by accepting the dictum of any writer, however notable or with whatever authority he may claim to speak.

It may, however, be interesting to append an account of the state of feeling respecting Jesus which recently existed (and probably does still) amongst some of our Asiatic fellow-subjects, who have emancipated themselves from their inherited faith, and who have adopted that of pure theism. We quote from an article in the *Contemporary Review* for February, 1870, by Sophia Dobson Collett. She says—

"The present state of feeling on this subject is thus epitomized in an article (avowedly by Keshub) on 'The Spirit of Christ,' in the *Indian Mirror*, April 30, 1869: 'There is an infinite diversity of feeling among Brahmos respecting Jesus of Nazareth, ranging from intense hatred on the one hand, to profound reverence and personal attachment on the other. Many there are, especially among the old Brahmos, who look upon him with almost the same spirit of sectarian antipathy and abhorrence as Hindus, and even go the length of calling him an impostor. Such ideas are happily dying out. The vast majority of our brethren of the progressive school cherish respect and gratitude towards Christ, and some

even accept him as a guide and master. . . . Surely it is our interest and duty to receive from him that practical moral influence which he is appointed in God's economy to exercise on our souls, to love him, and revere him, and follow his teachings and example.'"

For ourselves, we shall not think it necessary to prove that Jesus was both morally and intellectually far above the average of men; we shall assume that each of our readers is sufficiently familiar with the New Testament, and has enough soundness of judgment to conclude, without going further, that the great Nazarene was not, if we know anything of him, in any respect *below* the average human being; a fair subject of inquiry being—how high above that standard he may be placed, if, indeed, the height be not infinite.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS: IMPORTANCE OF THE INQUIRY.

WE have seen how differently men think of Jesus, and what various beliefs and opinions have found expression concerning him. Is it, then, worth our while to consider the questions hereby raised, and to endeavour to follow the rule, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," in the present instance, by trying and searching what knowledge is possible for us respecting the prophet of Galilee? And if even no knowledge, yet what evidence of probabilities? Is the subject important to us? We are told on all sides that it is, and that the question, "What think ye of the Christ?" is, even in this our day, perhaps the most weighty that can by any possibility engage our attention.

That word "Christendom" is very suggestive—the dominion of Christ. It reminds us what mighty influences, emanating either directly or indirectly from Nazareth, have been at work in building up our modern civilization, such as it is. Influences, if not always the direct result of Jesus' teaching and life,

yet of men's faith in him—of what has been taught respecting him. Hence, what other historical subject can compare with this in importance, affecting, as it does, the whole community of nationalities constituting Christendom?

And, apart from its interest as a historical question, and looked at merely as one of general human interest, the fact that Jesus has occupied some of the most gifted minds from his own age down to the present day might well arouse our curiosity, so that we also may be excused for desiring to look into the circle of ideas and sentiments revolving around him as a centre. The questions connected with Jesus of Nazareth are, then, important, if we only knew as much as this. But we know also that these questions personally concern us much more intimately. Looking at the estimate of Jesus given above by those who do not acknowledge him as the Hebrew Messiah—the King anointed of God, if even the lowest estimate of those we deemed it worth while to quote be found correct, still Jesus is one of the souls specially noteworthy for their kindling power, and surely we need all influences for good that we can readily have access to, to restrain our native selfishness and to fan into a flame, even if intermittent and but faintly burning, any spark susceptible of enthusiasm for humanity. Better than nothing if love of the Nazarene constrain us but thus far—or, if not love, say admiration of or sympathy with him. "Look on our divinest symbol—Jesus of Nazareth," says Carlyle, "a symbol whose

significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into." If it prove a veritable symbol of salvation from sin, shall it not be welcome? Yea, if the name of Jesus prove itself a talisman, operating, we know not how, to surround us with a pure atmosphere of thought, and to stir our languid souls with impulses to good, with yearning towards "the kingdom of God and His righteousness," then we shall not have sought acquaintance with him in vain.

But we will remember that perhaps the most vital element of righteousness is—Truth. It is the whole of the theory, and no small part of the practice. For Truth comprehends the whole of knowledge, which if not of facts, is but sham knowledge. We will, then, try to come to "the knowledge of the truth," "as it is in Jesus," or, at any rate, to such knowledge of the facts about him as is possible for us.

If we see reason to believe he has been commissioned by God "to lead men to truth and virtue," we shall do well to follow his guidance. If we find him worthy to be "a universal Model," we shall be improved by being moulded, to some extent, after his image.

But now, what does the Church say of the importance of learning all that she professes herself able to teach of Jesus? Let us hear the words which she has transmitted to us as being the words of Jesus himself. "Every one, therefore, who heareth these words of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock." "Come unto

me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, *even* Jesus Christ."

The importance of knowing the truth concerning Jesus is also affirmed in the New Testament in words which are not given as having been uttered by Jesus himself. We appear to be told * that it was the Baptist who said, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth (or believeth) not the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

If Jesus be in very truth God's Anointed, King and Saviour of mankind, Incarnate Righteousness and Wisdom, then indeed it is manifestly of great moment that we should know this, and render to him the obedience due. The vast importance of believing on Jesus, and openly confessing this belief is distinctly affirmed by most of the writers of the Christian Scriptures. Thus Paul tells the Roman believers (x. 9): "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from

* John iii. 36.

the dead, thou shalt be saved." We find also in 2 Thess. i. 7–9 the following words:—"the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord." "How shall we escape," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "if we neglect so great salvation?" The writer of the fourth gospel states that the object held in view by himself in writing it was, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (xx. 31). See also 1 John iv. 3: "Every spirit, which confesseth not Jesus is not of God;" and 15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." Again (v. 10, 11), "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son." Also 2 John 9–11, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and brings not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh of his evil works." Finally, in 2 Peter ii. 1, we read of persons, for "denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."

These words are still echoed and re-echoed from ten thousand pulpits, and as many Christian teachers ring constantly the changes, and they are various, on the words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." On the one hand, we are told by divines of the Episcopal Churches of England and Ireland, as well as by the Roman Catholic, in the words of the Athanasian Creed, that, "Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly;" a portion of this Catholic faith being the words quoted concerning Jesus from the same creed in the former chapter.

And we are also informed by divines of the Church of Scotland, quoting from their Confession of Faith, viz. that of Westminster, chap. 33, par. 2, "The wicked, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments." For those who ask to have these "eternal torments" more plainly defined, there is the answer to Question 29 in the "Larger Catechism," viz. "Most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell fire, for ever." To these torments all are destined who are not saved, and lest it be supposed that only the flagrantly "wicked" will be thus condemned, we quote Answer to Question 60, "They who, having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."

But here it is due to ourselves and our readers to admit that we cannot profess to urge the hideous clauses above quoted as reasons why we should seek to know Jesus. We let them stand as part of what is still nominally held and authoritatively stated, but we do not now write for such as accept *literally* either the Catholic or Calvinist creed in its entirety. We are not speaking of such persons as explain away what is most offensive to the unsophisticated (like the late Charles Kingsley, who wrote, in all sincerity, in defence of the Athanasian Creed), but of those who profess to believe either creed in its most obvious sense. We shall hardly obtain serious readers from amongst these.

The masses of the people, also, who frequent Methodist and other evangelical places of worship, and especially those who are found at "revival services" and in the ranks of the "Salvation Army," give utterance in song to their conviction of the supreme need for belief in Jesus as "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."

> "Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;
> Only believe, and yours is heaven."

So the Methodists; but the more thoroughgoing of the Evangelicals echo the oft-quoted words found in some collections of hymns for revival services:—

> "Till to Jesus' cross you cling
> By a simple faith,
> *Doing* is a deadly thing,
> Doing ends in death."

We see, then, that the question "What think ye of the Christ?" is truly a momentous one, and, in words at least, is by the majority confessed to be so. It is not a question confined to any particular class or section, but one that intimately concerns the welfare of every individual, and as such ought to command the serious attention of all who are able to consider it, and who have not already done so.

This great importance of the subject is, strange to say, to many the very reason why they do not seriously entertain it as a question. Awestricken by the terrible doom pronounced on want of belief—on unbelief, they hasten to silence any unwelcome doubt of the truth of the creed which they have been trained from infancy to regard as certainly revealed from heaven; such doubt they unhesitatingly stifle as "devil-born."

This is an attitude, however, which we, on the eve of an inquiry into the truth concerning Jesus, cannot take. Whatever may be our private conviction, it does not become us to assume beforehand the truth of any particular view or set of views.

The whole question is to us, at this our present standpoint, an open one, excepting only the extreme aspects we have already noticed, but to reprobate as too absurd for this discussion.* Therefore, and because we are bound, previous to inquiry, to admit

* We mean that we—and, we presume, our readers—had already given such attention to them as they deserve, and had rejected them long before entering on the present inquiry, any consideration of these revolting dogmas belonging to a more elementary stage.

the possibility of the truth of each and every one of the various beliefs we have, without criticizing, noticed respecting Jesus, we are also under obligation to recognize the magnitude of the issues involved, and to confess that *doubt* on the main questions must be indeed misery—that suspension of judgment would be fatal to inward peace.

To say that a subject is important is to affirm that it is important to know the truth respecting it. This is now generally acknowledged. The age is passed in which men could be publicly asked to silence doubt in any other way than by resolute searching after truth. To stifle doubt is evidence of laziness, cowardice, or imbecility. To be apathetic regarding a matter of such grave import is a state of mind wholly indefensible; the trifler himself admits his folly. Those who state that the truth cannot be known, have assuredly no right to do so before they have tried to find it. For our own part, as regards the question of the importance of the subject, we are disposed to admit it, even if the result of inquiry be that no evidence of the supernatural is forthcoming in connection with the great Nazarene. In that case, to say nothing further of the moral benefit to be derived from studying the character and teaching of Jesus, it would still be a great work, in which each may be allowed to help according to his ability, to free the world from the terrible dogmas which cluster around the name of Jesus, some of which we have alluded to above. For *if* Jesus was, after all, a merely

natural man,—indeed, if there be no evidence amounting to a balance of probability for the miraculous, then these doctrines can no longer be sustained, and deserve to perish as colossal fictions, of which great will be the fall.

That the author of "Supernatural Religion," for example, came sincerely to just this negative conclusion, is evident to any one, not a bigot, who reads him. He believed himself able to enlighten others on the subject, and was therefore justified in attempting to do so. To dismiss his plea of duty as a mere pretext is worse than a breach of good manners; and to stigmatize him as *guilty*, because he gives the reasons for his honest convictions (however mistaken he may be), is to show that one has not apprehended one of the most elementary ethical truths.*

There is one aspect of the subject which does not, it seems to us, command the attention it deserves. That is, the moral obligation resting on men, and especially on teachers of religion, to refrain from affirming the truth of any disputed proposition, unless

* We were led to make these remarks on reading the following in reference to "Supernatural Religion:"—"The guilt of one single murder, which shortens the span of one little life, seems trivial compared with the guilt of this prolonged effort, under the pretext of fulfilling the duty of religious inquiry, to reverse and annul the greatest gift of Divine goodness to a dark and sin-disordered world; and, after the true Light has dawned, to shut up the present and all future generations of mankind in Stygian darkness for evermore."—"Supernatural Revelation; or, First Principles of Moral Theology," by Rev. T. R. Birks, p. 17. We may, however, remind ourselves and readers that though the work from which we have obtained this verdict bears a recent date (1879), yet the author belongs to a former generation.

they possess evidence of its truth. We are often told that belief is free, that a man has a right to hold and express any opinions he chooses on religious topics. But his liberty of speech does not release him from the duty to refrain from affirming that to be true which he does not know to be true, at least when its truth is disputed.

Thus, if a man had a right understanding of the moral obligation of veracity he would see that it would be wrong to say with Dr. Watts, without the prefix, "I believe"—

> "There is a dreadful hell
> And everlasting pains,
> Where sinners must with devils dwell,
> In darkness, fire, and chains,"

unless he *knew* it to be true. It is not sufficient, for example, for him to point to a similar statement in any book of the Bible, as proof of its truth, unless he has previously proved that every statement in that book, or by its author, is true.

We do not condemn as *guilty* of untruthfulness those parents and ministers of religion who make such affirmations in good faith, even though they have not sought for evidence of the truth of the proposition affirmed, but we say they err through ignorance of what veracity requires of them, and that their act of thus seriously affirming a statement whose truth they have not verified, is, considered in itself, a wrong act Many ministers of religion need to have this doctrine of the supreme importance of truth and truthfulness,

and what is involved therein, pressed home on them; they need, many of them, as they preach to others, to be preached to themselves, and to have their consciences, on this so often dormant side, stirred and awakened to sensitiveness.

CHAPTER III.

HOW MAY WE OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS?

SINCE it is important that each one of us, learned or unlearned, should come to the knowledge of the truth respecting Jesus, or since it is, at least, desirable to ascertain what we can know of him, we have next to ask—where may we get the satisfaction we require? How may we obtain knowledge of Jesus?

Certainly not from his own writings. Jesus did not write, or if even he wrote a few letters it is allowed nothing has been transmitted to us which we can depend on as having been written by him. But there are other celebrated names of antiquity, borne by men who likewise did not write—take, for instance, the famous one of Socrates, or the infamous one of Nero. How may we learn anything of them? The probable reply will be—by consulting their biographers or historians, by reference to the pages respectively of Zenophon and Tacitus. True, and then you may know what Zenophon wrote of Socrates, and what Tacitus wrote of Nero. We desire, let us say, to form a just estimate of the character of Queen

Elizabeth, and for that purpose consult Hume. Do we, then, know what Elizabeth was? No; we only know that Hume wrote thus and thus of her. If, on the contrary, we had read Lingard and adopted his judgment of that princess, it would differ from that of Hume. And Hallam would lead us to a conclusion different from that of either of the others. It is notorious what dissimilar verdicts have been pronounced on Mary Stuart; but the case which has struck us most forcibly is that of Madame Roland. In our first chapter a quotation was introduced from the *Quarterly Review* respecting her; it was this:—"To say that she was without fault would be to say that she was not human." A reader of this passage thus meeting her name for the first time, would surely form an exalted opinion of her character. If, then, he happened, afterwards, in reading Carlyle's "French Revolution," to see her there termed "the noblest of all living Frenchwomen" (vol. i. p. 263); and to remark, in vol. ii. p. 78, "Envious men insinuate that the wife of Roland is minister, and not the husband; it is, happily, the worst they have to charge her with," that opinion would be confirmed, and he would be almost inclined to think "the force of Nature could no farther go."

Yet let an ingenious youth who has thus learned to think of Madame Roland meet with another who has only heard of that lady from the Regius Professor of Modern History in Queen's College, Belfast—Mr. Charles Duke Yonge—and in the following words,

thus:—"It was in more than one point of view characteristic of the party" (the Girondins) "that the person who, of all others, had the greatest weight in its councils was a woman of the name of Roland, the wife of one of the Norman deputies, and of so sanguinary a temper that as early as the summer of 1789 she had recommended the assassination of the king and queen, while they were still in fancied security at Versailles, and that, in the course of the next year, she plotted the assassination of one who was by far the ablest of her husband's colleagues, because he was not prepared to acquiesce in the measures of extreme violence which alone found favour in her eyes" (p. 229). This one will probably regard her as simply a monster of ferocity, the other thinks of her as a spotless heroine. And each can quote, in his own support, the verdict of history. Alas for us, if our "life eternal" must depend on these things!

Where we are greatly interested in getting at the truth, we must not, it is clear, confine ourselves to one writer, nor only to the writers on one side, but having consulted each, it rests with us to decide between different authorities. We must ask, what were the sources of information open to the several historians or biographers? Did they avail themselves of them? We ask this of each; and, further, is he careful or careless about writing what is true? Has he any bias likely to mislead him?

By thus using the true key to the treasures of

knowledge—cautious inquiry, though still liable to err in details, we may be generally sure of certain broad facts of history and biography, by which the after course of events may be made more clear. And are we thus asked to know the truth "as it is in Jesus" by those teachers of Christianity who insist most strenuously on the necessity of our knowing him? Not so. The watchword of the Church is not "Inquire," but "Believe." Most of her authorized ambassadors seem to say, "Believe—without inquiry, if you can; but if not, inquire of us, and we will produce you evidence—of a sort." The "only true Church" claims to be the infallible teacher of the truth about Jesus, and how many churches claim to be inheritors of the fundamental truths respecting him? But the most ancient claimant and the most modern agree in the character of their appeals to the ignorant. They first try to alarm them into belief, and, if unsuccessful, they endeavour to astonish them into it. "Behold the blood" (of St. Januarius). "Bow down your soul before this well-attested miracle of healing wrought on a devout Catholic by his touching, in faith, a leg-bone of a martyred saint, or at least make a pilgrimage to La Salette or Lourdes, and you may receive the faith that cometh by hearsay."

"To remove your doubts, if you wish to believe, God will cause our 'prophet seer and revelator' to stand in the air without support."

But the Catholic Churches, especially the Roman, have many other arguments, and appeal in many

other ways to different classes, convincing only those who already believe that an "only true Church" does exist somewhere.

Popular Protestantism, too, claiming no infallibility, professes herself able to direct you to a "short and easy method" of obtaining a knowledge of Jesus. Appeal is made to the individual consciousness. "You know you have often done wrong—you feel yourself a sinner. You feel that you deserve the torment of hell for ever. Those feelings are convictions of sin, wrought in you by the Spirit of God. You know, too, that you cannot save yourself. You feel that you need a Saviour. Well, this Saviour, Jesus, has been provided for you. We are authorized to present him for your acceptance. Believe on him, and you are saved."

Some persons, however, perhaps the majority, do not feel thus, and it would seem that people generally are less susceptible of such convictions than they were a few generations ago. And many there are who distinctly reject the inference of eternal damnation, from the consciousness of sin. The "bad conscience" of former days readily accepted this doctrine; the more civilized "moral faculty" of this latter part of the nineteenth century decidedly rejects it, so that, though still believed in, it is generally on other grounds than the affirmation of conscience.

"But," says the advocate of Evangelical Protestantism, "does not the story of the Cross carry with it its own evidence? That God, the Creator and

Lord of the Universe, moved by Infinite Love, should become man, and suffer death at the hands of his creatures to atone for their sins, and save them!! Could fallen man have invented this?"

To which we may reply, without calling in question the scriptural doctrine of atonement, that we are not compelled to choose between accepting the popular doctrine as a Divine Revelation, and rejecting it as a human invention. Nor does the request for evidence of the necessity for such a sacrifice imply any doubt that Infinite Love would willingly have made it, if the necessity had existed.

"Well," replies our Evangelical friend, "the evidence you request is readily producible. Have you not known a foul-living man, a contemner of all things sacred—at length, his hardened soul reached by the Gospel message; a cold horror seizes him, his heart is chilled and heavy with the fear that the hell he deserves will be his doom. Yet see him half an hour after, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. An 'unutterable tenderness' has come over him; he is experiencing 'all the silent heaven of love.' What though the big tears are, all unheeded, swiftly succeeding each other down his cheek, his face is radiant with a divine joy. He *knows* that his sins are forgiven, his leprosy cleansed. He is amazed, overwhelmed at the long-suffering love of Jesus—such love to *him*. And now, see, he is ready 'to testify to all around, that he, even he, has mercy found.' That man's life is henceforth changed.

He is cleanly, sober, loving, and reverent, and the strongest wish that possesses him is that others, too, may be rescued from the mire of sin, and saved from the fire of hell. Now, what has wrought this change but the Holy Spirit witnessing to the blood of the Lamb? Witnessing not only to his own spirit, but to all observers, that by that blood, through faith therein, he is saved. Will not this evidence of Divine interposition satisfy you? This is no fiction. In thousands of lives this salvation has been an accomplished fact. And I appeal to your knowledge of such facts."

We, on our part, willingly and gladly admit the reality of such facts, and that such conversions are often lasting; nor do we deny that such "works of grace" may well, from their quality, be termed divine. But the whole seems to us quite in accordance with, and such as might have been expected from, the natural workings of human emotion under the circumstances. In all that there is really no proof of the supernatural. We see, indeed, in the above case abundant evidence of the sincerity and intensity of the man's belief, but none whatever of its accuracy. We met, the other day, in *Good Words for the Young* (November, 1870), with an account, by the late Dr. Macleod, of the fear entertained by the West Highlanders of an imaginary sea-monster, termed a water-horse, or kelpie. His informant, a certain Donald, considered his own intense fear a reasonable proof of the monster's existence. "'Och, och!' said poor

Donald, 'that day and hour I'll never forget—never, never, as long as I live . . . I trembled all ower.' 'Why?'" said the doctor. "'You may ask, for I never was feared for mortal thing, nor for mortal man, nor for a bull; and if I was feared that day, tell me hoo was that possible, if the horse was not there?' (in the lake). 'I could not be feared except for that. So, you see, he *was* there. Yes, he was there.' 'Indeed,'" said Dr. Macleod; "'but did you see him there?' 'Oo, no,' said Donald, slowly and meditatively, 'I did not —see him—that is—altogether—actually; but——' 'But what?' 'But as he was there, and as there's not a doubt about *that*, I am thankfu' that I did *not* see him, you may be sure.'"

His *belief* that the monster was there produced the terror, it mattered not whether the belief was well or ill founded. And in the above case of conversion the man had inherited or acquired in childhood his general Christian belief—that of the popular Protestantism. In his state of sin, and while hearing a "powerful preacher," such a belief, right or wrong, would, if once allowed to operate, naturally produce such a state of terror. The greater wonder is that so many remain unmoved. And any modern Whitfield or Wesley, nay, even a Moody, finds little difficulty in persuading one in great fear, who is already convinced that Jesus died to atone for all the sins of *all mankind*, that he therefore died for *him*. Let the penitent for but a moment realize this, his own belief, and rest on it as desired by his spiritual guides; reflection super-

vening, he becomes, on the instant, conscious that *he has believed*, and therefore he is *saved*. No wonder the rebound is great from terror to joy, when he exclaims, "My debt is paid, my soul is free, and I am justified." "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me." Hence, too, arises grateful love.

Nor is it wonderful that such an emotional convulsion parts him for ever from his past life, that it should prove purifying to a large extent; for it is generally inculcated, except by Calvinists, that wilful sin, after conversion, cancels his pardon, and places him again under the wrath and curse of God. There are, however, many instances of such relapse.

Leaving, then, on our right hand and on our left, these and other "short and easy" substitutes for the true method of cautious inquiry, we shall have, before reverting to it, to encounter another objection. It is urged that if we can only obtain a knowledge of Jesus by the slow, tedious, and uncertain method of historical inquiry, the poor and ignorant may well despair of doing so; there is then no gospel for them, but only for the learned, or for the wealthy who have leisure to become so. "We," say they, "contend that the poor have a right to have the gospel preached to them, and affirm that they have in their hearts and consciences 'a verifying faculty'; they have, or by faith they may have, the witness within them. You insist on their becoming theologians, of the sort specified by Sir William Hamilton. Hear what he says: 'Christian, and more especially Protestant, theology

is little else than an applied philology and criticism, of which the basis is a profound knowledge of the languages and history of the ancient world. To be a competent divine is, in fact, to be a scholar.' Set the poor man *thus* on his way to Jesus, through 'the languages and history of the ancient world,' and when would he reach him? The task would be impossible. Such a course would be of uncertain result even for the learned, as historians themselves will bear witness. A recent Professor of History (Goldwin Smith) tells us,* 'Historical evidence is not a ground upon which religion can possibly rest.' And Mr. Froude, one of our greatest living historians, asks how we can talk of a science in history, in which we can only guess at the probable, instead of knowing the certain. In 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' p. 13, he says, 'Tacitus and Thucydides were perhaps the ablest men who ever gave themselves to writing history, the ablest and also the most incapable of conscious falsehood. Yet even now, after all these centuries, the truth of what they relate is called in question. Good reasons can be given to show that neither of them can be confidently trusted. If we doubt with these, whom are we to believe?' We cannot suspect historians of a bias against their own profession, therefore when *they* point out the inutility or untrustworthiness of history in general, we cannot but believe them, and we are therefore sure that God

* "Rational Religion and the Rationalistic Objections of the Bampton Lectures for 1858," p. 108.

never intended us to attain to the knowledge of Jesus Christ whom he has sent (which knowledge is eternal life) by the laborious and uncertain paths of historical research. Those who advocate this method of coming to Christ, calling such 'cautious inquiry' 'the key of knowledge,' do in effect 'shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: they enter not in themselves, and those who are entering they hinder.'"

There are persons who would hit us thus hard—for did we not begin the chapter by pointing out the uncertainties of history?—and who would plead after the above fashion against inquiry, but to what end? Can they alter the truth that historical questions must be solved by the cautious methods of modern inquiry, *or left unsolved?* All past biography belongs more or less to this historical region, and how can that of Jesus be excluded? No; if we cannot thus know the broad facts of his life, we cannot know them at all. Of the detail we may possibly know little or nothing, and perhaps, in what seems best established, we may have to be content with probability. The question is, What knowledge of Jesus is available for us, and how may we obtain it? There are, presumably, great difficulties in the way of entire certainty respecting some important points, else why such diversities of opinion? Well, what then? If we cannot get certainty, let us take the greatest probability, and if that is not worth much, let us confess our ignorance and then hold our peace. At any rate, we can do better than to exclaim, 1st, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation to

know Jesus; 2ndly (in the same breath), that we cannot know him by historical inquiry—attempting to reconcile the paradox by dignifying with the name of *knowledge* the blind traditional belief acquired in infancy, namely, because born in such and such a place, and of such and such parents. We hold it better to follow the advice of that other Jesus, a predecessor of the Nazarene, who quietly advises* to "Profess not the knowledge therefore that thou hast not."

And as to the necessity laid on us (according to the Church) to know Jesus or perish eternally, if the knowledge is necessary, it will probably be found attainable by rational methods; if not so attainable, this to us will be sufficient proof that no such necessity exists. But perhaps our evangelical friend would like to hear Professor Goldwin Smith speak to the same purpose, in the work quoted above, p. 107, "If he" (God) "has not given us conclusive evidence of any fact which we may imagine to be of vital importance to us, it must be because that fact is not of vital importance in his eyes."

We have seen, however, that there are conclusions in which all agree, so that we have already a standing ground, a base of operations.

Thus we know that Jesus of Nazareth was, if nothing more, a great and good man, a religious teacher, who, at Jerusalem, "suffered, under Pontius Pilate," the death of the cross, between the years 26 and 36.

* Ecclesiasticus iii. 25.

What he more precisely was, and whether he possessed qualities which must be deemed supernatural, and if so, to what order of beings he belongs, and how related to us, are questions to which, as the result of the inquiry before us, we hope to be able to give some sort of answer.

It is true, indeed, that many, even of the learned, have been baffled in their attempts to delineate truly the historical Jesus, and that we (being of the unlearned) cannot expect to succeed where they have failed; moreover, we can only inquire at second hand.

Why, then, do you presume to write on the question? the reader may, not impertinently, ask.

We reply, that the learned have mostly written on this subject for their own class. Moreover, we have never met with a life of Jesus which has come near to satisfying us—the available materials not having been, as it seems to us, efficiently used. Perhaps, because first, the critics have often spent so much time and labour over comparatively trifling questions, that their books are dry reading for the general public, however useful their work may have been as pioneer work; and secondly, of those who have written for the English people, some have used the New Testament without sufficient discrimination, while others have gone to the other extreme, and, alleging the paucity of materials, have left too many unsolved enigmas.

Finally, we think a just judgment on the main questions at issue may be arrived at even by us, the

unlearned, *by using independent thought on any version of the New Testament*, and by consulting the critics (of various schools) through the medium of translations, accepting their conclusions where they agree, and using our own judgment where they differ. And as even this involves a vast amount of labour, too great for the opportunities of most men, we think we can do something worth while in the way of lightening this labour, and in giving a rough sketch of the path of inquiry. We hope, then, that our book will not have been written in vain, but that it may be regarded as helping to form another needed step in the way to the Life of Jesus of Nazareth.

That any average man may arrive at a right conclusion on the main questions is a view not confined to the Churches. The same opinion is expressed by the most renowned of those who, in the present century, have attempted to lead men from the Churches, viz. by Dr. D. F. Strauss, who says, "It is a mere prejudice of caste to fancy that ability to comprehend these things appertains exclusively to the theologian or man of learning. On the contrary, the essence of the matter is so simple, that every one whose head and heart are in the right place may well rest assured that whatever, after due reflection and the proper use of accessible means, still remains incomprehensible to him, is in itself of very little value." *

We return, then, to a fuller consideration of the question—Where may we obtain reliable information

* P. 8 of Preface to "Life of Jesus for the People."

respecting Jesus of Nazareth? And here there is a general agreement that, setting aside the supernatural methods of the Churches, there is little or nothing to be gleaned respecting him outside of the New Testament, beyond confirmation of the bare facts that he lived in Palestine, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, which we get from the Roman historians. The histories of the Jews, written in the century after Jesus, teach us nothing about him. The silence of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian whose works have been preserved to us (setting aside the interpolations, which, however, give nothing new), is well known. Justus, the other Jewish historian of the time of Josephus, and a rival of that writer, wrote the history of the Jews to his own time, the third year of Trajan, but, says Photius, a Christian author, "being under the Jewish prejudices," "he makes not the least mention of the appearance of Christ, or of what things happened to him, or of the wonderful works that he did."* Philo, of Alexandria, though a contemporary, appears to have been ignorant of Jesus' existence.

The teaching of the Nazarene, and the cures presumably wrought on many of his hearers, constituted a social movement affecting the lower strata of provincial Jewish society, but, as we shall perhaps see more clearly, had but little political significance.

In the Apocryphal Gospels not a single detail can be relied on.

* Whiston's "Josephus."

In early Christian writers there is little to be found except what is of a character similar to the contents of the Gospels, if we except two or three new sayings of Jesus, which we may notice further on. Practically, then, we are shut up to the New Testament, and for our knowledge of this sacred volume, we, who are unable to read it in the original, must rely on the learned who have translated it for us. Every one has, or may have, in his hands some version of this volume.

But are the learned sure that they possess the true Greek text, the original text of each book of the New Testament? On the contrary, they well know that they, in many cases, have it not, being bewildered by the various readings. "The critical labours of Griesbach," as we are told by Samuel Sharpe, the Egyptologist, "in examining the age and value of the manuscripts, and in settling the Greek text of the New Testament, are too well known to need any remark. His text, in the edition dated Leipsic, 1805, is the standard to which most scholars appeal." This is quoted from Sharpe's Preface to his translation of Griesbach's text, his first edition having been published in 1840. But since that time many others have added the results of their researches, especially, Dr. Tischendorf has appeared with his Codex Sinaiticus. And how near do Biblical scholars now approach to perfect knowledge of the original text? It is well known that not a single original manuscript remains of any of the New Testament Scriptures, and though all critics admit that every book therein was written before

the close of the second century, we have no manuscript remaining of an earlier date than the fourth century. There are "three manuscripts of earlier date than any others" (we quote from *Macmillan's Magazine*, of several years ago, article by G. Grove, entitled, "The New Testament under a new aspect"). "The first of these, known as the Vatican Manuscript, is in the Vatican at Rome; the second, the Alexandrine Manuscript, in the British Museum; and the Sinaitic Manuscript is at St. Petersburg. The date at which the first and third were written is somewhere between A.D. 330 and 350, the second is a century or so later, say 450. These three are now admitted, by those best qualified to speak on the subject, to contain the nearest approach which we yet possess, or are likely to possess, to the original writings of the New Testament."

And what discrepancies exist between these and the more modern manuscripts? We will quote from the same article, two or three of the most striking: "There are few who, if asked to name the incident which most clearly embodied the justice, mercy, and tenderness of Christ, and supplied us with the most precious traits of his personal manners, would not quote the story of the woman taken in adultery. And yet there can be little doubt that this story (John vii. 53, to viii. 11) did not exist in the original Gospel; in fact, did not make its appearance in any edition till the middle of the fifth century."* "The words (Matt.

* This passage will be seen separated out by the revisers, who say,

v. 44) 'Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,' and pray for them which despitefully use you, although they lie at the very foundation of Christian morality, must henceforth be swept away." The following words also are "an interpolation in copies made after the middle of the fifth century, viz. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' Even the utterance of our Lord on the cross, Luke xxiii. 34, is an interpolation of later date than either the Sinaitic or Vatican manuscript: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"

But, on the other hand, "there is a saying attributed to Christ; it occurs as an interpolation in Luke vi. 4, in the later manuscripts, and is as follows:—'On the same day he saw a certain man working on the Sabbath, and he said unto him, Man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed, and a transgressor of the law.'"

It is obvious that omissions of any portions of the original text are far less likely to have been made than additions thereto, and as respects these latter, it is not to be concluded as certain, that they were made after the date of the earliest manuscripts, because not found therein; it is known of some that they were in existence previously, having been quoted by the

"Most of the ancient authorities omit John vii. 53 to viii. 11. Those which contain it vary much from each other."

fathers before that date. But in either case their genuineness is doubtful.

And as to this test of the genuineness of any passage in the New Testament, viz. its having been quoted by the early fathers of the Church, it may be remarked that the alleged quotations, those of the second century, for example, differ so considerably from the existing manuscripts, that in many cases it is a subject of dispute among the critical schools as to whether they are quotations from our books at all or not, it being asserted by many that they are from other books not now existing.

Now, regarding the early date at which corruption of the New Testament abounded, we have the express testimony of Origen, who flourished some 120 years before the earliest of our manuscripts was written. The following is quoted from Dr. Scrivener, in Mr. Sanday's "Gospels in the second century." "Origen's is the highest name among the critics and expositors of the early Church; he is perpetually engaged in the discussion of various readings of the New Testament, and employs language in describing the then state of the text which would be deemed strong if applied even to its present condition with the changes which sixteen more centuries must needs have produced. . . . Respecting the sacred autographs, their fate, or their continued existence, he seems to have had no information, and to have entertained no curiosity: they had simply passed by and were out of his reach. Had it not been for the diversities of copies in all the

Gospels on other points, he writes, he should not have ventured to object to the authenticity of a certain passage (Matt. xix. 19) on internal grounds. 'But now,' saith he, 'great in truth has become the diversity of copies, be it from the negligence of certain scribes, or from the evil daring of some who correct what is written, or from those who in correcting add or take away what they think fit.' "

It is, then, at least highly probable that even the earliest manuscripts we possess differ in many particulars from those written by the authors themselves. This is so, especially with the Gospels, and the result is that we can scarcely, in a single instance, be quite sure that we have had preserved to us a faithful transcript of the original record, whether of the sayings of Jesus or of the circumstances attending his actions.

But though this uncertainty exists, and will continue to exist respecting minor details, it does not follow that we need remain in a state of similar ignorance respecting what the Evangelists wrote of the more important matters.

If we except the first chapters of Matthew and Luke, relating to the birth and infancy, since opinions are somewhat divided as to whether or not those chapters formed part of the original Gospels, we may safely affirm, without fear of contradiction from any quarter, that if we had perfect translations of the original text of each of the Gospels, we should find no material difference between these and the four

Gospels of the Revised or even the Authorized Version in respect of their statements regarding these main features alleged of Jesus' life and work, viz. :

1. That he was morally stainless.*

2. That he was the Christ predicted, the Son of God.

3. That he wrought many miracles (all or nearly all those recorded in the respective Gospels).

4. That he was a God-inspired preacher of righteousness, and as such ought to be obeyed.

5. That he was raised from the dead.

As to each and all of these important groups there is a general agreement, amongst those who ought to know, that our present Gospels are substantially faithful to the original texts, that is to say, each to each.

The same may be said of the following amplifications of Nos. 2, 5, and 3 :—That his advent was foreseen hundreds of years before his birth by Isaiah and other supernaturally inspired Hebrew prophets, who foretold that a Divinely Anointed king of the Israelitish people should appear, and that these Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. That Jesus, having been raised from the dead and having ascended into heaven, is the Lord, and will be the final judge of mankind. That among the miracles which he wrought when on earth are to be reckoned the feeding and satisfying of several thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes; and the

* We do not allege, however, that the moral perfection of Jesus is distinctly affirmed in every Gospel of our versions.

healing, by a word, of diseases (as leprosy, for instance) hitherto pronounced incurable.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist on other points as to the teaching of our Gospels, there is almost, if not entire unanimity in this—that *at least* they teach the particulars above named, and that in so doing they truly represent the original text.

Reverting now to our remarks at the beginning of this chapter as to the need of cautious inquiry before accepting as true the statements of historians, those remarks apply with greatly increased force to the extraordinary narratives of the New Testament. First, because, as we have seen, it is of great moment that we should know the truth about them, if it can be known; and secondly, because of their extraordinary, not to say miraculous, character.

We will again name two or three of the New Testament statements, which possess, in a striking degree, both characteristics, viz. of grave importance and of marvellousness, as—

First, That the advent of Jesus was proclaimed centuries before his birth; secondly, That by his Word alone he caused the multiplication of loaves and fishes to an enormous extent; and thirdly, That his dead body was, by divine power, reanimated.

As regards importance, the first and third of these are well known to be the corner-stone and chief support of the whole structure of Christian doctrine—of Christianity as a doctrinal system. And as to their extraordinary nature, without entering on the question

of miraculous or not miraculous, we affirm that they are quite contrary to—utterly at variance with—our life-long experience of nature and human nature; so different from our daily and hourly experience of the course of events for all the years of our life, and from the experience also of all others, so far as we are acquainted with them, that we do not know whether such occurrences are even *possible* or not.

We cannot, therefore, accept them as true—we ought not—without rigorous scrutiny of the evidence in their favour. It is an ancient maxim that, in reference to events admittedly possible, two or three witnesses are necessary to establish a disputed fact; but, to prove such statements as we have singled out from the New Testament, we must at least—in the first place, have the testimony of several actual witnesses of the occurrences, agreeing in all important points; secondly, we must know these witnesses to be of unimpeachable character; and thirdly, we must be fully acquainted with the circumstances, to judge whether the witnesses could possibly have been mistaken as to what really occurred.

Have we, then, such evidence? Have we in the New Testament—*i.e.* in its writers—the undoubted testimony of a sufficient number of such witnesses, under such circumstances as preclude the possibility of mistake? We shall have to see what answer can be truly made to this inquiry. And, while doing so, we are free from little questions of translation, interpolation, and so forth, for no one doubts that the three

important statements we have singled out were in the original manuscripts as they are in our common Authorized Version, and in that given us by its learned revisers.

"There is satisfactory evidence," wrote Archdeacon Paley, "that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct."

This proposition applies, in all its force, to "the feeding of the five thousand," and also to the resurrection of Jesus, and were we, like Paley, satisfied with the evidence for it, it would only remain to inquire into the circumstances to decide as to the possibility of mistake, and if there were no such possibility, we should, I think, accept the statements as facts.

Let us first see whether or not we can accept the celebrated proposition of Paley without some important qualifications.

The marvellous feeding with a few loaves and fishes is asserted in the first four books of the New Testament, and the resurrection is either expressed or implied in almost every one?

We turn, then, to the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, to inquire: first, Who were the writers? secondly, What was the character of these

writers? and thirdly, What were their sources of information?

First, then, who were the authors of the New Testament? Was each of its books written by him whose name it carries on its front?

On looking over the Boyle Lectures for 1863, on "The Divine Plan of Revelation," by Edward Garbett, M.A., we were somewhat surprised to find this question answered as follows. The author, stating that the evidences from miracles and prophecy were "positive proofs not even touched at any single point by the weapons of modern criticism" (see p. 6), says, "It" (modern criticism) "allows *all* the books of the New Testament to be the productions of the authors whose names they bear."

Perhaps Mr. Garbett has since made similar statements in the lectures delivered for the Christian Evidence Society; but, if ignorant of modern criticism, why did he not remember that, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"? In contrast to this, we find in the "Congregational Year Book for 1874," p. 41, that "To so destructive lengths has internal criticism proceeded, that there is a school which admits the genuineness of five only among all the books of the New Testament canon." Thus the Rev. J. Radford Thomson, M.A., who might even have gone a step further, and have said,—there are only *four* books whose genuineness is not disputed by some critic of the first class.

It will be convenient for us to divide the New

Testament books into two classes, viz. those which profess to relate the details of the life and teaching of Jesus, and those which do not. To the first category belong the four biographies or Gospels, and to the second all the other books of the New Testament canon. As the latter can be more speedily dealt with, we will glance at them first.

Of these twenty-three books there are but four which are admitted genuine by the consent of *all* critics of the highest eminence. These four are—the Epistle to the Galatians, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans (except its two last chapters), all which we may regard therefore *as unquestionably written by Paul.* When such a man as Baur can admit only these to be of Pauline origin, we of the uncritical class are bound to suspend judgment. For who was this Baur? Let us ask a countryman of his, though not a follower—Dr. Christlieb, university preacher and Professor of Theology at Bonn, who will tell us,* "Of all modern opponents of our old faith the greatest is Dr. Ferdinand Christian von Baur, Professor of Theology at Tübingen (died December 2, 1860), one of the greatest, if not the greatest, theological scholar of this century; after Neander, the most notable historian of the Church, not only in Germany, but in the world; the most indefatigable of investigators, especially as regards the history of

* We quote at second hand from p. 39 of "The Wave of Scepticism and the Rock of Truth," a little work written in opposition to that entitled "Supernatural Religion."

primitive Christianity, in the elucidation of which he has deserved well of theology. He stands a head and shoulders above all our modern opponents of the miraculous. . . . If human power, human diligence and acuteness, could ever bring about the overthrow of our faith, this man would have accomplished it."

Others of less "vigour and rigour" admit as genuine about one-third or even half the books of the New Testament. Dr. Davidson, for example, nine. Dr. Otto Pfleiderer, Professor of Theology at Jena, etc., puts forth the following in regard to the Pauline writings:—"In addition to the four undisputed Epistles I hold to be *genuine* the First to the Thessalonians, the Epistle to Philemon, and that to the Philippians; as *unqualifiedly spurious*, that to the Ephesians and the three pastoral Epistles; as *spurious with qualifications*, the Second to the Thessalonians, and that to the Colossians. In these two, and especially in the last, it appears to me as impossible to conceive that they are genuine in every part as that they are in every part spurious; and since this is so, scarcely any other conclusion remains for us than the view elaborated by Holtzmann in the most recent work on the Epistle to the Colossians and the Ephesians, *that the Epistle to the Colossians which we have is founded on a genuine letter of Paul, retouched by a later hand.* But I cannot agree with Holtzmann in thinking that the hand is that of the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians," . . . "that to the Colossians being a monument *of a development of Paul's doctrine after the time of Paul.*

With the Epistle to the Hebrews and that to Barnabas, it marks *the first phase of this development*, determined chiefly by Alexandrian influence. The second phase of it is mainly represented by the Epistle to the Ephesians, the tendency of which towards Church union has already been foreshadowed in the First Epistle of Clement and the First of Peter." *

Turning now to the greatest champion of the old faith who has appeared in modern times, Dr. Augustus Neander, who was Professor of Theology in Berlin University, we find he doubts the Pauline origin of the First Epistle to Timothy. In his "History of the Planting, etc., of the Christian Church by the Apostles" (Ryland's Translation, 1851), he says, in footnote to p. 339, "I cannot deny that when I come from reading other Pauline Epistles, I feel myself struck by the impression of something not Pauline."

The Apocalypse, he, like Luther, "cannot acknowledge as a work of the apostle;" and the Second Epistle of Peter he unhesitatingly styles a forgery, and gives in a note to p. 376, "The principal marks of the spuriousness of this Epistle." †

Professor Plumptre would plead for at least a suspension of judgment in regard to this Epistle, for he points out resemblances in expression between it and the Gospel of Mark (who is, by many orthodox critics,

* Introduction to "Paulinism," p. 29.

† "If there is any recent theologian from whom I have learnt more than from another, it is the German Neander."—Professor (now Bishop) Lightfoot, May, 1875, in *Contemporary Review*.

supposed to have derived his information from Peter); only it is unfortunate for his argument that the expressions he quotes are not peculiar to Mark, being also found in Matthew.

To readers of the Boyle Lectures for 1863, and works of similar character, the notion of any book of the New Testament being forged may be a novel one, but let them turn to the above-mentioned work of Neander's, and they will find it stated, fol. 204, "Such forgeries were not at all uncommon in this century" (the second?), "and the authors were very adroit in justifying such deceptions, for the purpose of giving currency to certain principles and opinions." *

The Second Epistle of Peter, though professing to have been written by an apostle, is of no use to us as evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, because of its uncertain authorship; we will therefore dismiss it from the present inquiry. As to the other disputed books, the Epistles of James and Jude, and the Apocalypse, they do not profess to have been written by apostles, by witnesses of the life and resurrection of Jesus, and therefore will not serve any purpose of evidence thereof, except to confirm the fact—which, however, does not need confirmation—that a belief in Jesus' resurrection existed before the year 70.

The three Epistles of John are also anonymous, and their apostolic origin is widely questioned; and the nine professing the authority of Paul, besides that

* See also Strauss, in "Life of Jesus for the People," vol. i. pp. 148, 149.

to the Hebrews (so often ascribed to him), being rejected by the Tübingen school of criticism, and, even if genuine, containing nothing more of import to our inquiry than is to be found in the four admitted Epistles, may also be dismissed from our consideration. And on similar grounds the Acts of the Apostles should be set aside from the ranks of the witnesses for Jesus.

Of the nineteen disputed books of the New Testament there now remains but the First Epistle of Peter to be noticed by us; and, besides the fact that its genuineness is questioned by many competent to judge, it may be doubted whether it affirms the bodily resurrection of Jesus at all, since, according to some translators, it states (iii. 18), that he was "made alive in spirit." * It is not to be questioned that Peter did actually believe in a resurrection of Jesus from the dead, either bodily or only spiritual.

Turning now to the four Epistles of Paul before named, which, according to Baur, "bear in themselves so incontestably the character of Pauline originality that it is not possible for critical doubt to be exercised upon them with any show of reason," it must be admitted that they contain evidence not to be excluded from any inquiry concerning the reality of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; but, as it is not certain that Paul had ever seen Jesus during his life, we shall reserve any notice of these till we treat of the events subsequent to the crucifixion.

* The revisers have "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit."

We have next to consider what knowledge of Jesus is accessible to us in the four biographies termed "Gospels." Each of these affirms, amid other matters, the reality of the two great events, which, as we have said, require the confirmation of such weighty and uncontradicted evidence. We therefore, as before, commence by asking, who were the authors of these books?

We are informed by Paley,* "The received author of the first was an original apostle and emissary of the religion. The received author of the second was an inhabitant of Jerusalem at the time, to whose house the apostles were wont to resort, and himself an attendant upon one of the most eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a stated companion and fellow-traveller of the most active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the course of his travels frequently in the society of the original apostles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the first, was one of these apostles. No stronger evidence of the truth of a history can arise from the situation of the historian than what is here offered. The authors of all the histories lived at the time, and upon the spot. The authors of two of the histories were present at many of the scenes which they describe, eye-witnesses of the facts, ear-witnesses of the discourses." Thus Paley; but since his day, what giant strides have been made in the field of Biblical criticism!

What eminent critic will now affirm that the first

* "Evidences," vol. i. p. 117.

three Gospels were written respectively by Matthew, Mark, and Luke? The Johannine authorship of the fourth is also very widely questioned. The first three, called from their similarity the Synoptic Gospels, are now admitted by all moderate and well-informed theologians to be, more or less, of the nature of compilations, and to be void of the stamp of personal testimony to the events they record. For example, we are told by M. de Pressensé, of the Orthodox Section of the French Reformed Church,* "All those who have not gone into the question with an inflexible bias have agreed to place the composition of our three first Gospels between the years 71–80, and to see in our canonical narratives the reflection of an anterior tradition. The time allowed is very short, as it appears to us, for such a legendary manipulation of facts as should have entirely transformed them."

It will be remembered that the Boyle Lecturer for 1863 stated, that even the modern critics opposed to Christianity admitted that "All the books of the New Testament were the productions of the authors whose names they bear"; but if we take up the Boyle Lectures of three years later (1866) by the well-known Professor (now Dean) Plumptre, we find, on pp. 39 and 40, comparing the Gospels with the Pentateuch and the historical books of the Old Testament, he says, "So three out of the four bear every mark, in their agreement and their differences, of having been compiled, in like manner, from that diffused tradition, and

* See p. 142 of "Jesus Christ," Annie Harwood's translation.

those many memoirs of the life of Christ. How far the names which the prescriptive tradition of the Church has affixed to the four Gospels indicate actual authorship, has been, and may be, questioned. The substance of the books themselves contains no statement by the writer as to his own name and position; and the names affixed by transcribers are not in themselves more convincing than the headings, often doubtful, of the Psalms, or the notes, often misleading, appended to St. Paul's Epistles."

Mr. Sanday, in his work written at the request of the Christian Evidence Society,* says, p. 151, "The theory that we have in the second Gospel one of the primitive Synoptic documents is not tenable." And of the first he says, p. 152, "It is both secondary, and secondary in a lower stage than St. Mark: it has preserved the features of the original with a less amount of accuracy."

We thus see that the ground taken by Paley, in reference to the authorship of the Synoptic Gospels, has been abandoned as no longer tenable; and, however pardonable ignorance of this fact might have been in 1863, it may be presumed no future Boyle Lecturer will put forth a statement similar to that quoted from Canon Garbett, since even in so widely diffused a work as that of Canon Farrar's "Life of Christ," we find the fragmentary nature of the Synoptic Gospels distinctly affirmed, thus: "The Gospels are, of their very nature, confessedly and designedly fragmentary,

* "The Gospels in the Second Century." Macmillan, 1876.

and it may be regarded as all but certain that the first three were mainly derived from a common oral tradition, or founded on one or two original, and themselves fragmentary, documents." *

The question of the authorship of the fourth Gospel occupies a different position. Its Johannine origin has been earnestly contended for by Neander, Ewald, and other eminent modern critics, and as stoutly denied by Baur, and by a constantly increasing number of those who have learned of him and of his school. "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?"

We can, however, question the critics again as to how far they agree or disagree on certain other points affecting the authority of the Gospels. For instance, all are agreed that they were ascribed respectively to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John some twenty years before the close of the second century.

All are agreed that each of the four was written before 180; that the fourth Gospel is rightly placed after the others, having been written last; and that the third was written or compiled by the author of the Acts of the Apostles, and previously to his publication of that work: most of them are also agreed in giving the priority of time to Matthew, as did the ancient Church.†

* See vol. ii. p. 171 (eighth edition, 1874).

"St. Matthew's is certainly the oldest of the Canonical Gospels, and therefore it served as a pattern for the two others. That he wrote first, and wrote in Hebrew, is the tradition of the ancient Church, represented by a line of witnesses stretching back into apostolic times, and commencing with Papias, which was never questioned by any

Matthew wrote in Hebrew according to Papias, who flourished about the middle of the second century; but that, says Mr. Sanday, "the large majority of modern critics deny to have been the case with our present Gospel."

It is, however, probable, we think, that its compiler used the work of Matthew as his principal source for the discourses of Jesus.

With regard to the date of the first Gospel, modern critics are far from being unanimous.

Some there are who confirm the testimony of Irenæus (see above, 63–67), but these are extremists; and those who, like the author of "Supernatural Religion," take the other extreme, refuse to admit any positive proof of its existence till a century after.

Many of those, however, who name a date as early as 70, do so only for the nucleus or foundation of the Gospel. Keim is one of the most strenuous contenders for the early composition of this gospel. He says ("Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. p. 73, T.T.F.L.*), "The book, and not only its source, is written about A.D. 66, and "most modern critics ascribe this Gospel, or its earliest germ, to this time, or, in general, to the years 60–70, as indeed Irenæus named the date of the preaching of Peter and Paul at Rome (A.D. 64); Baur, however, which is quite untenable, has suggested the

ancient authority. St. Irenæus adds, that he wrote when intending to leave Palestine at the time of the common labours of Peter and Paul in Rome, *i.e.* between 63 and 67 A.D."—Dr. Dollinger's "First Age of Christianity and the Church." Translated by H. N. Oxenham, M.A.

* See p. 13.

years 130–134, the date of the second fall of Jerusalem under the emperor Adrian; Volkmar, the year 115, or, of late, 105–110."

Nevertheless, Keim affirms of the Gospels generally, that "the accounts of eye and ear-witnesses were a source which had long been dry, and in the oldest we possess there is already a world of myths."

Dr. Samuel Davidson happens to take the mean between the extremes, and names 100 as an approximate date for the first Gospel; he thinks the other two Synoptics were written within twenty years after.

It is true, Dr. Davidson's Biblical criticism proceeds a long way on the negative side, yet here we find him in substantial agreement with one of the most recent Christian apologists, the Rev. Prebendary Row, Bampton Lecturer for 1877.

In these lectures, entitled "Christian Evidences viewed in Relation to Modern Thought," the Prebendary of St. Paul's makes a candid statement of the difficulties in the way of a decision, and, in presenting us with his own conclusion, is careful to avoid extremes.

We, in fact, see no reason why we should not accept his finding as, at least, probable. He says, "The evidence afforded by the earlier writers amounts only to a very high degree of probability, which diminishes in force as we ascend upwards, and will in no case carry us higher than the last ten years of the first century. But our greatest difficulty is this, that the evidence is made up of the balance of so large a

number of intricate probabilities, which vary greatly in weight, as to require an intellect highly trained in such studies to estimate them at their proper value; and it is, moreover, a kind of evidence which will be estimated differently by different persons" (p. 276). And on p. 273, "The whole of the evidence, however, if taken together, may be considered as establishing beyond reasonable doubt that the Synoptics were in existence during the first twenty years of the second century."

As far, then, as concerns the Synoptic Gospels, we cannot perhaps do better than rest here, where Dr. Davidson joins hands with Mr. Row.

All critics of note are agreed in dating the fourth Gospel at least about a generation after the first. Some place it over half a century after. But between the earliest and latest dates named there is (as in regard to the first) a difference of some seventy or eighty years, the dates ranging from 90 to 160 or 170.

Dr. Keim, who unhesitatingly denies its apostolic origin, while he admits there are traces of its existence in Justin, in Barnabas, and as far back as the year 120 —and to that extent has become, as he says "almost the warmest defender of the antiquity of the Gospel" —closes his long discussion of its date by saying, "While, therefore, the ancients, and recently Ewald and Weizsäcker, as well as Tischendorf—who thinks that all the four Gospels 'must' have been extant soon after the destruction of Jerusalem—have fixed the origin of the fourth Gospel at the close of the first

century, the Tübingen school has, with many variations, supposed that it took place in the latter half of the second century, 160–170: we maintain that it was, according to all appearance, at the beginning of the second century, the time of that emperor Trajan in whose reign John, according to Irenæus, must have lived, about A.D. 110–115" ("Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. p. 207, T.T.F.L.).*

In a note at the same page, Dr. Keim tells us that Hilgenfeld and Volkmar also firmly maintain about A.D. 160 as the date of the fourth Gospel.

But Keim has himself since approached some fifteen or twenty years nearer to the Tübingen critics on this question, for in vol. iv. of the same work, he tells us (in a footnote to p. 264), "The supposition that Barnabas had John ii. 11 in mind, I no longer maintain, because I believe I am now able to show the somewhat later date of that Gospel (about A.D. 130)."

We find that Dr. Davidson, in his "Introduction to the New Testament," takes 150 as a probable date.

Mr. Sanday agrees with Tischendorf in placing even "the latest of our Gospels" within the first century, except that he does so with far greater diffidence. In fact, a page or two further on he enables the reader to qualify this judgment. Thus, "When we say that the very names of the first two evangelists are not mentioned before a date that may be from 120–166

* All our quotations from Keim, Baur, etc., are through the medium of these translations.

(or 155) A.D., and the third and fourth not before 170–175 A.D., this alone is enough, without introducing other elements of doubt, to show that the evidence must needs be inconclusive." *

On the same page, he says in respect to the testimony of Irenæus, so firmly relied on in some quarters, "The cases are not quite parallel, and the difference between them is decidedly in favour of Irenæus; but if Clement of Alexandria could speak of an Epistle written about 125 A.D., as the work of the apostolic Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul, we must not lay too much stress upon the direct testimony of Irenæus when he attributes the fourth Gospel to the Apostle St. John."

From all this it is clear we do not know by whom any one of the Gospels was written, nor do we certainly know when; while for the fourth Gospel we may assume as probable that the most moderate critics are nearest the truth, and we may regard as somewhat of an approximation to the date of its issue any year from 130 to 150.

We get, however, one evident result, which is, that moderate criticism, in relation to the *external* evidences for the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel, leads inevitably to a negative conclusion.

How different is the situation from that existing in the time of Paley! He could speak (as any one from the time of Irenæus might have done) of Matthew,

* "The Gospels in the Second Century," by W. Sanday, M.A., p. 346. Macmillan, 1876.

Mark, Luke, and John as "the received authors" of the respective Gospels that bear their names, but now not one of them is even generally received, by those best able to decide, as the author of a Gospel.

Paley asked why the received authorship of the Gospels should be called in question any more than that of profane histories. "Because," says Professor Goldwin Smith, although not, we believe, in reply to Paley, "In no one of the five cases (Herodotus, Livy, etc.) could there be the slightest motive for attributing the work to the person whose name it bears, if it was not known to be his, whereas there was obviously the strongest motive for attributing a Gospel of uncertain authorship to an Apostle." *

The second century abounded, as a matter of fact well-known and admitted by Paley, in spurious Gospels and other writings falsely ascribed to apostles. "There was any number of such apocryphal Gospels, as Irenæus says." † "It would be idle," says Professor Plumptre, "to pause on these fables were it not that they have leavened, and still continue to leaven, the theology of so large a portion of Christendom." The question with Rome is, to an increasing extent, he says, whether the creed of Christendom is to be based on the canonical or apocryphal Gospels. But if, in the canonical Gospels, we have not evidence at first hand (as our estimable professor himself admits of the Synoptics, see the words quoted from him a page

* "Rational Religion and Rationalistic Objections," p. 105.
† Neander, "Life of Jesus Christ," p. 34.

or two back), if these were not written by witnesses of the events, are they not also, to some extent, apocryphal? It is now abundantly clear that the universal consent of the Church for 1600 years is no guarantee to us of the genuineness of any book of the New Testament, and the fact that "forgeries" were so common in the first two centuries after the apostles forms a third reason for extra caution in our inquiries for evidence, before accepting the events recorded in the Gospels as facts.

We have, then, already seen that ordinary secular history is not to be firmly relied on without careful examination and comparison of authorities, and that the New Testament records demand that this scrutiny shall, in their case, be still more severe, because of—first, The paramount importance of the issues depending on them; secondly, The marvellous character of the events recorded; and thirdly, The uncertainty as to the authorship of the records.

If, now alive to the strictness which truth demands, we leave the critics, and question the Gospels themselves for ourselves, let us see how we may reasonably be affected by their general characteristics; how a perusal with this object may affect our judgment of their value as testimony.

It is generally admitted that such a perusal is calculated to impress the reader with a conviction of the sincerity of the writers; we feel that they were men who believed what they wrote, and whose testimony may be accepted as to events witnessed by

themselves, whether or not we agree with them as to the inferences to be drawn therefrom.

That the evangelists believed what they wrote is manifestly true, but it must be apparent to any candid and intelligent reader that they did not write as men desirous of giving their personal testimony to important events witnessed by themselves, for not one of the writers affirms his own presence at any one scene; not one speaks in the first person; not one announces himself by name as the author. For example, of the events described in the first Gospel, those at which Matthew was not present are described as minutely as are those which may be presumed to have transpired in his presence; and conversely, there is as much vagueness when Matthew is supposed on the spot as when absent.

Again, no one, one would think, can believe, after reading the four Gospels with a mind attentive to the question of evidence, and then comparing Mark with Matthew, that these two gospels were written independently of each other, for, out of many more events than those related in detail, each writer has chosen to particularize almost precisely the same, and in very much the same order.

Bearing in mind, then, the vagueness of these writings in relation to personal testimony, the uncertainty as to the authorship, and as to the relation of the writers to the events, as regards both time and place, we must conclude that the united evidence of the four Gospels is far from sufficient to render credible

such a narrative as that of the feeding of the five thousand, or that of the resurrection of Jesus, *without taking into account any discrepancies that occur in the several narrations.*

We need not ask whether the four biographies of Jesus which have come down to us in the New Testament agree on all points—whether the Gospels can be perfectly harmonized.

If the harmony was complete in every detail, we should still, as we have already seen, be uncertain whether those details agreed exactly with those originally presented by the writers; but it is well known, and is generally admitted, that, whatever may be the case in matters of vital importance, there are numberless small details of time, place, and circumstance in which our Gospels are at variance with each other. "I do not regard as possible," says Dr. Farrar, "any final harmony of the Gospels" (see "Life of Christ," p. 17 of Preface); and in a note to p. 279 of vol. i. he observes, "In the face of such obvious variations—trivial indeed, yet real—such as exist between them, in recording exact words (*e.g.* those uttered in Gethsemane, or by the apostles in the sinking ship) and facts (*e.g.* the order of the temptations and the title on the cross), I do not see how their *supernatural and infallible accuracy*, as apart from their absolutely truthful evidence, can be maintained."

As to the question of the resurrection, there is other evidence which we hope to consider in the proper place, viz. after the events of the life of Jesus.

It has, however, been affirmed that, irrespective of the question of authorship of the Gospels, and even of their value as testimony, *if* they were published as early as 60–70 (or any one of them), and if the narratives they contain were fictions, "they could not, by any imaginable possibility, escape immediate and certain detection and exposure." This was the dictum of Dr. Ralph Wardlaw, in a work on miracles. He seems to have supposed, like Paley, that as the bards of old recited the exploits of their heroes, so the preaching of the apostles consisted of a constant recitation, not only of the teaching, but of the acts, the marvellous deeds of Jesus; and that, if the Gospels were promulgated amongst a people familiar with all (?) the details of Jesus' actual life, anything discrepant from these would have been summarily rejected, and would never have gained belief in the Church. But on what is the notion of the apostles narrating the details of Jesus' public life founded? Certainly it has no support in the New Testament. The specimens of the preaching of the apostles given in the Acts, the Epistles—not only those of Paul, but also those attributed to Peter, James, and John—bear no trace of such narratives. Besides, the years 60–70 are the earliest *now* named by "critics of eminence" for the origin of the Gospels, and the writing must have preceded the publication by some interval, we know not of what duration. But even if we take the earliest date, and suppose the contents of the Gospels at once widely circulated among those who had listened to

the apostles, we have no ground for supposing that a marvellous narrative appearing therein would be rejected by any reader because he then met with it for the first time.

"At that time, everything that seemed to redound to the glory of . . . however extraordinary and incredible, was eagerly welcomed, while witnesses who would have ventured to criticize or reject unsupported statements, or to detract in any way from the holy character of . . . had no chance of being even listened to." Might it not have been thus, to some extent, after the lapse of a generation from his death, with the followers of Jesus, even as Professor Max Müller tells us it was with those of Buddha?

> "As circulates, in some great city's crowd,
> A rumour, changeful, vague, importunate, and loud,
> From no determined centre, nor of fact,
> Or authorship exact," *

so, in two or three decades of years after Jesus' death, might most of the Gospel narratives of wonderful events have been spread and believed here and there in the absence of the original disciples. Founded, many of them, doubtless, on facts, which should be stubborn according to their proper nature, yet somehow they often become but as the nucleoli enveloped in a substance of elastic texture and Protean disposition.

"Repent (of incredulity) and believe the gospels," cry some, "or else explain how their narratives could

* Arthur Hugh Clough.

have originated, and how they could have obtained credence."

But, say we, has there never, then, in the world's history, been any example of an untrue report having been circulated in good faith by those who believed on hearsay evidence?

Or have there, on the other hand, been millions of such cases?

And is it not sometimes difficult, if even you live in the same town, contemporaneously with all concerned, to ascertain exactly how the thing arose? True, difficulties of locomotion may be now easily overcome, and Palestine is not so far as Australia, for instance; yet it were hardly worth while for any enthusiastic truth-seeker to proceed thither to compel rumour to point out her sources, when all the tongues have ceased wagging for eighteen hundred years.

If the object is simply to believe, the old method is, after all, the easiest, *after the first step is once taken*, viz. we have but to believe firmly (if we can) that the whole New Testament is so inspired as to be infallible in all details, and no further difficulty will be experienced.

You may then readily enough grant the tendency to evolve myths, and the great distance of time between the events and the record, since all these things, far from being against you, will beautifully serve to demonstrate only the necessity for the guarding inspiration of that record.

"Truly," says one, "if a few weeks can throw such

a haze around facts, what would a century without a written record have done for Christianity, or what would that record itself have been without inspiration?" *

We need not suppose a gap of a hundred years; we have only seen reason, in fact, to look for one of seventy years, but herein is "ample space and verge enough" for "the myth-making tendency" to work in, and even to give a few finishing "graphic touches."

This tendency, says Dr. W. B. Carpenter, "far more general than is commonly supposed, builds up the most elaborate constructions of fiction upon the slenderest foundation of fact" (Mesmerism, Spiritualism," etc., p. 94).

We will ask Mr. Matthew Arnold to give us a few instances from Herodotus, and to remark thereon. We quote from "God and the Bible," p. 47: "Herodotus relates that when the Persian invaders came to Delphi, two local heroes buried near the place, Phylacous and Antonous, arose, and were seen, of more than mortal stature, fighting against the Persians. He relates that before the onset at Salamis, the vision of a woman appeared over an Alginetan ship, and cried in a voice which all the Grecian fleet heard, 'Good souls, how long will ye keep backing?'"

"He relates that at Pedasus, in the neighbourhood of his own city, Halicarnassus, the priestess of Athene had a miraculous sprouting of beard whenever any grievous calamity was about to befall the people

* "Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family," p. 293.

around ; he says, in one place, that twice this miraculous growth had happened, in another, that it had happened thrice. Herodotus writes here of times when he was himself alive, not of a fabulous antiquity. He and his countrymen were not less acute, arguing, critical people than the Jews of Palestine, but much more. Herodotus himself, finally, is a man of a beautiful character and of pure, good faith," and putting side by side with these narrations the statement of the dead saints appearing to many after the Crucifixion, the voice to Paul, etc., Mr. Arnold says, "we know how the sort of story grows up."

He says also, p. 55, "the story of the feeding of the thousands may well have had its rise in the suspension, the comparative extinction of hunger and thirst, during hours of rapt interest and intense mental excitement. In such hours a trifling sustenance, which would commonly serve for but a few, will suffice for many. Rumour and imagination make and add details, and swell the thing into a miracle."

And for resurrection of the dead, the Gospels themselves supply an example of groundless belief therein ; that of John the Baptist, for example, by Antipas and others.

Far from relying on popular rumour when she announces a resurrection, we may not always do so when she simply tells of a death. We may quote from Judge Hanson,*—"the story told by Foxe in

* "Jesus of History," p. 116.

his 'Book of Martyrs,' of 'one Greenwood,' who, as a perjured person and a great persecutor, had been struck dead by the hand of God, and the use made of it by a preacher, as an illustration of divine justice in a sermon that he preached in the hearing of Greenwood himself, who, by his living presence, offered a convincing practical refutation of its truth, has been preserved for us in a legal decision."

Our Gospels, then, with this yawning gulf of seventy or one hundred years between the events (whatever they were) and the records (such as they are), do not, it must be admitted, supply reliable testimony for the truth of even the most commonplace statement, unless otherwise supported, say by intrinsic evidence. The most conservative person would be ready to admit this in any case where religious beliefs were not involved. We met, for instance, with the following in reading Professor Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers." He says in the Appendix, to justify his disbelief of Wodrow's statements respecting Grahame of Claverhouse (written thirty-six years after the events), "tradition, of course, is against me, but when I find no articulate voice uttered by tradition until after the expiry of thirty years, I am not disposed to give much weight to it as an accessory, far less to accept it as reasonable evidence." And on the next page he remarks, "vulgar credulity owns no limits, and the lapse of thirty years is sufficient to account for the currency of the grossest fable." Need we point the application?

Charles Kingsley has given us sufficient reasons why we should believe *none* of the monkish accounts of the miracles and visions of his Hermits, though there is as much evidence in favour of them "as there is with most men of the existence of China." Yet he believed in those recorded in the New Testament. He shall tell us why. Because, he says, "the apostles and evangelists were sane men; men in their right minds, wise, calm, conducting themselves (save in the matter of committing sins) like other human beings. . . . The calm, the simplicity, the brevity, the true grandeur of the . . . style of the apostles and evangelists . . . is sufficient evidence of their healthy-mindedness and their trustworthiness" ("The Hermits," p. 313).

Then taking leave of the external evidence—immeasurably insufficient—we come (if we are still asking, "Where may we obtain *reliable* information concerning Jesus of Nazareth?") to the internal warrants for believing. It can only be answered, "Try the Gospels." They ought not, it is true, to be relied on as trustworthy evidence for the marvellous, if the events of that character cannot otherwise be proved credible. Yet the internal evidence may be such as to make it almost certain what the main characteristics of Jesus' life and teaching were; and as for single details, each will be, in its degree, probably true in proportion as it harmonizes with the whole, and as it fitly supplies any perceptible gap. If the abnormal portions of the narrative seem to be mere excrescences,

they must be pared away; if, on the contrary, the natural life and teaching of Jesus cannot be separated from these elements, it will remain to be ascertained why; we must ask whether this inseparability arises from the strength or weakness of the internal evidence. In the latter case, we may have to conclude all alike dim and uncertain; in the former, we may be constrained to accept the supernatural, notwithstanding its lack of external support.

To the Gospels, then, let us come, and see whether their narratives are—in respect of the main features of Jesus' life and teaching—consistent with each other; whether each Gospel is, in all important particulars, consistent with itself and with the others.

This harmony, or the want thereof, must be specially noticed in respect to the corner-stone, the great central doctrine, and, indeed, entire foundation of Christianity, viz. that Jesus was the Christ predicted by Hebrew seers. We have seen that, from the defective nature of the evidence for the "mighty works" recorded in the Gospels, they cannot be used in support of this doctrine, nor do the Gospels supply proof of the resurrection of Jesus; which resurrection is represented in the New Testament as the sufficient proof of his Christhood. If, however, the other evidence for the resurrection to which we have alluded should prove its reality, and if from that and other considerations the Messiahship of Jesus should be held to be established, then we apprehend the otherwise incredible accounts of healing leprosy, feeding thou-

sands with a few viands, etc., etc., would become credible, and many of them even probable.

We shall, then, have to fix our attention especially on the claim made by Jesus to divine authority, with a view to ascertain the nature of this claim, and what it implied. On this point the third Gospel is in accord with the first and second, but being confessedly non-apostolic, it can scarcely add to their authority. We shall therefore confine ourselves almost exclusively to the first two and the fourth, in order somewhat to limit the area of research ; and, in respect to the first two, shall consider only that portion of the life of Jesus common to both, which is, in fact, only his public life, since Mark commences, not with the birth of Jesus, but with the preaching of the Baptist. And of Matthew Mr. Sanday says, "The first two chapters clearly belong to a different stock of materials from the rest of the Gospel." *

Coming, then, to the Gospels for information respecting Jesus, we intend giving, first, a brief outline of his life according to those attributed respectively to Matthew and Mark ; and secondly, for comparison therewith, an outline still more brief of the life according to the fourth Gospel.

* "Gospels in the Second Century," p. 153.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JESUS OF "MATTHEW" AND "MARK."

AT the time immediately preceding the public appearance of Jesus, the Jews of Palestine, and those inhabitants of its northern province of Galilee who professed the Jewish religion, together with their fellow-religionists in various parts of the Roman empire, believed themselves the peculiar people of God, in exclusive possession of his law, given in awful solemnity, detailing their duties both to himself and to each other, and also to the outer world; and that they were the inheritors of "great and precious promises," the fulfilment of which, though long deferred, was now to be looked for.

They believed that in ancient days God sought to rule their ancestors by messages given through prophets, declaring his will to king and people; and that the kings reigned by right divine, as Jehovah's anointed, to execute his commands.

Of their kings they deemed David the greatest (as, indeed, he was the most celebrated), and, with two or three glaring exceptions, the one after God's own

heart; and that God therefore promised, yea, even swore unto him, that his house should never fail, but that the kingdom should for ever be secured to his descendants.

The history—recorded in their sacred books—informed the Jews, as did also the writings of their prophets, that their ancestors, both kings and people, disobeyed God and disregarded his commands, and were therefore punished. That first, the greater portion of the kingdom, about four-fifths, was wrenched away from the house of David, during the reign of his grandson; and that eventually, some centuries later, the remainder was taken, the kingdom being then utterly destroyed, and the people sold into slavery or forcibly transplanted.

But prophet after prophet, from the commencement of their calamities, reminded them that their punishment was only temporary. They declaimed against wickedness, and exhorted to repentance, and sang in lofty and impassioned, though varied strains, of the impossibility of God's forgetting his promise to David—he would "heal their backslidings, and love them freely." He would restore them again to their own land of Israel, would give them a king of the Davidian line, who, besides the outward anointing of oil, should be spiritually anointed with righteousness, wisdom, and power. God would also, in those days, bestow his Holy Spirit on the people, that they might be cleansed from their wickedness, and enabled to obey his anointed. The prophets dilated in glowing language

on the glory and bliss of these Messianic days to come, when God should indeed reign, by his anointed, over his chosen people; when "out of Zion should go forth the law, and the word of God from Jerusalem." But the incorrigible should be utterly destroyed.

The Jews of the time of Jesus also learned from their histories, that in the days of the later prophets many thousands of their progenitors did actually return from captivity, rebuild the temple, and re-establish the worship of the one living and true God, and that neither these nor their descendants ever afterwards disobeyed him so flagrantly as their ancestors had done. They continued in their own land, though under foreign domination; the voice of prophecy became mute, and a process of assimilation to their latest conquerors had commenced, when they were subjected to a fierce persecution, which aroused them to fight for entire freedom, and that successfully. Then again were they ruled by a prince of their own, an anointed one of God, being also high priest, but therefore not of the line of David, and therefore not the anointed one promised by the prophetic voices of the past, which were to them the voice of God. Gradually, having sought alliance with the Romans, this powerful people established mastery over Judæa, and at length its inhabitants, shortly before the public appearance of Jesus, found even the semblance of independence taken from them by their former friends, who, however, according to their custom, permitted the Jews the free exercise of their religion.

At this time it was that a general belief was entertained that the day was drawing nigh—the day so long looked for—when God should invest his anointed, his Messiah, with the sovereignty of their beloved Israel; when the stranger should be extirpated, or, awestricken, should submit to learn humbly of the Jew, and to obey the anointed of God, and when the dispersed of Israel should be regathered to the land of their fathers.

It will, we presume, be generally admitted that something like this was, by very many, expected soon to happen in fulfilment of the prophecies of the establishment of the kingdom of God, and this at the time when the Gospel of "Mark" opens.

We propose now to give a rough outline of the *substance* of the first and second Gospels, dwelling chiefly on the portions connected with these expectations, premising merely that the books were certainly written by persons who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the subject of the Messianic predictions. We shall endeavour to confine ourselves to the literal sense of the text where possible, and to strictly legitimate inference therefrom.

In those days—after the lapse of several centuries—again a prophet made his appearance, in the person of John, called the Baptist. He was an ascetic, and lived in or near the Judæan wilderness, whence he came to the Jordan's banks to announce to the expectant multitudes the tidings that the heavenly kingdom, so long and so often predicted, was now about

to be set up, and that his own mission was to prepare them for it by exhortations to repentance, and by baptizing true penitents in token that their sins were forgiven (Matt. iii. 1, 2). Here we have in brief both the exhortation and the tidings—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "John came, who baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins" (Mark i. 4).

While John baptized with water all who came to him, not being able to discriminate between those who were sincerely repentant and the insincere or shallow, he told them it would be far otherwise with the Messiah, who would judge them in his baptism; those whose actions showed true repentance, he would admit into his kingdom, baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, but the others with fire unquenchable (Matt. iii. 11, 12).

John must have preached with wondrous eloquence and power, or else the Jewish nation, believing that the time had arrived for the advent of the Messiah, was peculiarly susceptible to religious influences, for we read that almost the whole people, including many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, came to John, seeking his baptism of repentance for the remission of their sins (Matt. iii. 5, 6; Mark i. 4, 5).

Among the rest came Jesus, in whose countenance and manner there would seem to have been something to impress an observer with a conviction of his moral excellence, for John acknowledged his superiority to himself, and with exceeding humility hesitates as to

whether he shall relinquish his high position in favour of the Nazarene ("I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"—Matt. iii. 14); but Jesus felt it his duty to make public profession of his repentance and desire of forgiveness. This evidently implies a consciousness of past sin; we need not accuse Jesus of the mere hollow conformity of submitting to a popular rite.* On the contrary, the plain inference from the narrative is that he submitted to it in all sincerity, and that he had "a realizing sense" of its efficacy, a consciousness that his sins were indeed remitted, and that he was now accepted as a beloved son of the Father. A dove which alights on him after his baptism is regarded by him (and rightly so, in the estimation of the writer of the Gospel) as an emblem of the Holy Spirit, conveying the divine peace to his soul. The evangelist does not intimate that John or the spectators heard a voice from heaven, or that they were conscious of any supernatural manifestation (see Matt. iii. 15–17; also Mark i. 10, 11).

Having thus been assured by the voice of God of his special favour, Jesus now longed for communion with his Divine Parent. He therefore (following the example of the prophets, and of John) went into the wilderness, where he remained forty days and forty nights without food, without even suffering the sensation of hunger. Here, then, was a great miracle,

* "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan" (Mark i. 9, see 4; and also Matt. iii. 6, 11, 13).

and one which raised Jesus to an equality with the wonder-working prophets of old, even the two chief, viz. Moses and Elijah, who had each been sustained this exact time without food by the power of God.

Though Jesus had had no distinct testimony that he was the Messiah, he yet had been acknowledged greater than John, the Messiah's forerunner. The heavens also had been opened to him in attestation of his possessing the peculiar favour of God; and now the divine power was displayed in his behalf, as it had been to the greatest prophets, and to them only. Was he not then himself the Messiah—the Anointed One of God—to whom all the prophets bare witness, and, therefore, not only equal to Moses and Elijah, but superior to them both? This question seems now to have occurred to him, and, along with it, a desire to put it to the test.

But Jesus remembers that always of old it was God who gave the word, and that it rather became him to wait on God, since he who had kept him hitherto "by the word of his power" could still do so, or by the same word could send him manna from heaven, as he did to the Israelites in the desert. He therefore resists the temptation, resolving to be led only by the Spirit of God.

Still, the desire to know whether he really is *this* Son of God (the Messiah) remains, and the devil takes advantage of it by proposing another test. Was it not written of the Messiah that he should be the peculiar care of angels, and should be borne up on

their hands when in danger of falling on the stones? Having reminded Jesus of this text of Scripture, the tempter suggests to him that he should put it to the proof by throwing himself off some high place, as the pinnacle of the temple. But Jesus recalls another Scripture to repel the temptation, where it is expressly forbidden to make experiments for the purpose of trying whether the power of God is with us or not (Exod. xvii. 7; Deut. vi. 16). He is thus strengthened in his resolve to wait on God.

But, letting miracle alone, what if, taking advantage of the popular enthusiastic expectation, he were to boldly announce himself as Messiah, and, arming the multitudes, were to lead them to victory like the Macabees; and, having freed the land from foreign domination, were then, like David, to subjugate the surrounding heathen, until, repeated conquests adding to his power, he might at length be able to overcome Rome herself, and, reducing to subjection the mistress of the world, would have even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

According to the literal reading, Satan takes Jesus to a mountain, and showing him all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory, offers to give them all to him, on condition of his falling down and worshipping himself. As there does not exist any mountain from the summit of which we can with our bodily eyes see all the world, we need not here take the literal sense. We may, therefore, conclude that Jesus reflected on the means by which the subjugation of

the world could be effected, and it seemed to him it could only be done by unscrupulous falsehood and cruelty. To determine on attempting it by these means would be deliberately to serve the devil, whereas men must worship and serve God only, seeking first the establishment of his kingdom and righteousness, not their own personal aggrandisement.

This, then, is the grand work to which Jesus will devote himself—he will assist John to bring in the reign of righteousness, the kingdom of heaven, or else will wait till he receives direct instruction from on high. The devil has done his worst with him, and behold, angels come and supply his wants (Matt. iv. 1–11).

If Jesus was now in any perplexity as to what course he should pursue, this did not long continue. He finds that John's career has been suddenly cut short by Herod, who has thrown him into prison. Here, then, is a call to take up John's work, to begin preaching repentance (if not to baptize), and to spread the good tidings that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He does not, however, affect the austerity of his predecessor, but leaves the desert for his native Galilee, to live, not with his mother at Nazareth, but at Capernaum, on the lake.*

At Capernaum he taught in the synagogue on the

* "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum. . . . *From that time began Jesus to preach*, and to say Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 12, 13, 17; also see Mark i. 14, 15, 21).

Sabbath, perhaps working for his bodily sustenance during the week (Mark i. 21).*

He now wished, as it were, to multiply himself, the harvest being so plenteous, and the labourers so few, and induces four fishermen, Simon, and his brother Andrew, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, to leave their avocations, and to come with him that he might instruct them with a view to their also preaching the good tidings (Matt. iv. 18-22 ; Mark i. 16–20).

While at Capernaum (according to Luke, before the call of the disciples, which, indeed, seems perhaps most probable), a man possessed by an evil spirit was freed by Jesus, whose fame soon spread over all Syria (Mark i. 23–28 ; Luke iv. 33–37 ; Matt. iv. 24).

There were probably by this time a great many who helped to maintain Jesus and his four disciples (Luke viii. 3) ; he therefore went with them about all Galilee, and found he had power to heal all diseases, which power he freely used, so that wherever he went he attracted vast numbers.

It would seem that the crowds who came to hear him were too great for the synagogues, so that he had to preach, like John, in the open air, on the sides of a mountain, or by the sea-shore.

* The record is very meagre as to this part of his history. We may, perhaps, assume that by degrees he extended his mission to the neighbouring towns on the lake, and the villages adjacent, as continued meditation and practice in speaking made him more efficient, and that when some of his hearers contributed to his support, he abandoned himself entirely to the work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

He explained to his disciples the nature of the kingdom that was coming—that is, who would be its most worthy subjects—and, avoiding altogether its external aspects (of which we may presume he knew nothing, and that his trial herein consisted), he saw clearly that God reigned in every soul that was conformed to His righteousness.

There was, therefore, something to be done by each person. Each should seek the kingdom, and enter, as Jesus had done, individually therein, leaving the rest in God's hands. To explain the nature of the kingdom was, therefore, to explain the nature of true righteousness. Having searched the Scriptures, and having meditated thereon, he was soon able to expound them as they had never been expounded before. Beginning with repentance, the gate of the kingdom, he had Scriptural warrant for pronouncing its blessings on such as, overwhelmed by a sense of their own guilt and insufficiency, were humbled in spirit before God. In such souls would God specially dwell (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2).

Thus the gospel of the kingdom, as preached by Jesus, was truly good tidings to all those who were mourning because of their sins, who were contrite and broken in heart before God. He felt that he entered fully into the most spiritual sense of the psalmists and prophets, and that therefore the Spirit of God was with him, *anointing* him to preach comfort to such mourners; "to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds;" yea, to proclaim the glad

tidings that even they were God's chosen ones, for whom was reserved "the oil of joy," and "the garment of praise," "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord."

Those who were thus contrite in the sight of God would be meek towards men, but where would the meek be in the stirring times that were coming, when stout-hearted warriors might expect to be called on to advance to victory under the banner of the heaven-chosen king? Yet these are not pronounced blessed, the blessedness is reserved for the meek, to them the announcement of the coming kingdom is good tidings, since they are, as it is written, to inherit the earth (Ps. xxxvii. 11).

Those who truly repent of past sin will bring forth fruits meet for repentance, they will "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Isa. lv. 1); these also are blessed, for the desire of their hearts shall be granted them.

Special blessings there were also for the merciful, for the pure in heart, and for the peacemakers, while those who had attained to such strength of righteousness as would admit of no compromise with sin, and who would therefore be likely to suffer persecution for its sake, were called on to rejoice as possessors of the kingdom, and worthy successors of the prophets.

Jesus warned his hearers that the righteousness practised by the most strict observers of the law fell far short of what was required in the new kingdom

He pointed out the imperfections of some of the commandments of the law: thus, it allowed men to return evil for evil; but Jesus, it is presumable, finds a higher law than this in the Book of Proverbs (xx. 22; xxv. 21, 22), and he betters its instruction by insisting that men should not only refrain from retaliation, but should do so from love to the offenders, and should, from the same all-conquering love, earnestly seek to bless them. He taught his disciples that they would thus prove themselves the children of God, if they were animated by His spirit of love towards all, towards the evil and the good.

He was careful to explain that he was not speaking against the ancient law, but rather using it as a stepping-stone to a higher; where no higher could be discerned, the written law was still to be literally obeyed.

But all depended upon the motive, the spring of action. The ruling principle, the strongest desire of the heart, should be that God might *reign* therein. Whoever had this was truly in and of the kingdom; he that had it not, however literally he obeyed the multitude of precepts of the Mosaic law, could not enter into the kingdom, his state of mind being clearly incompatible with citizenship therein. On the other hand, he who had such a desire, but yet was unwise enough to attack the law, or any part of it (say, as not being of divine origin, or as not being now binding), though he would still be in the kingdom, yet would be in the lowest rank; one, for instance, who,

instead of spreading great principles or opposing gross wickedness, should denounce any one of the precepts of the law because he could discern in it nothing worthy of God—say, for example, that forbidding the seething of a kid in its mother's milk (Ex. xxxiv. 26). For such a course, even if successful, would produce but a small benefit, and most probably would create an antagonism which would require all one's energies to combat.

The sincere desire to do the will of God from the love of it was to govern all actions. Hypocrites, who affected righteousness, who indeed performed right actions, but not from such a motive, were of no account in God's sight, could expect no reward or recognition from him. Did they act religiously to win the applause of those who could only form a surface judgment? Then, having this, they had all they had bargained for. The honours of the kingdom were not for these. Weighed in God's balances they are lighter than vanity.

It is clear, from the Hebrew writings, that the idea of God as the Father of men was not new to the Jews. He is the Father of all, being their Creator.* He is specially the Father of his peculiar people, his son Israel whom he called out of Egypt. In 4 Ezra (2 Esdras, though this book was probably not written till after the time of Jesus), we find Israel complaining thus to God of the heathen (vi. 58): "But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy firstborn, thy only-

* Malachi ii. 10; Isa. lvi. 5; lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8.

begotten, and thy fervent lover, are given into their hands." *

The righteous Jews were specially sons of God, as appears very plainly in the second chapter of the Book of Wisdom.

But with Jesus it was not occasional merely; it was habitual to speak of God as the Father. That is the dear familiar term that he almost always uses, and teaches his disciples to use, when they think of God, and when they pray to Him. To the question, What is God? Jesus virtually returns this answer: He is the perfectly righteous Ruler of the Universe, and our Father.

Jesus teaches his disciples how to speak to their Father, and what to ask for. In the first place, they may come to him as their Father, without any mediator, "no priest or veil between." What they should pray for is not the gratification of any whim or capricious desire, but that only which they know it is his will to give. The love of righteousness should sway the entire being; there should be not only the desire of doing right, but the desire that right be done, everywhere and always. If such is the wish of the soul, she will express it to her Father in prayer. Hence the prime request is that God's kingdom may (soon) come, that his will may everywhere be done.

As Jesus believes that God in ancient days wrought

* A somewhat similar conjunction of terms, "firstborn, only-begotten son," is also found in the "Psalms of Solomon," and is there also applied to the sons of Israel. (See "The Jewish Messiah," by Professor Drummond, p. 288.)

a miracle to give his people daily bread, he assumes that it is the will of God to give it still, and that therefore it is proper to pray for it.

Also, to be forgiven all past sin, and preserved from committing sin in future. And, in keeping with the command to "love thy neighbour as thyself," Jesus taught his hearers that in their prayers they should desire all the blessings prayed for, not for themselves only, but also for their neighbours.

The condition of God's forgiving their sins is not reliance on any atonement made by another, but their own sincere forgiveness of those who injure them. This they may even plead in their petitions to their Father in heaven.

Jesus may here only have followed his namesake, the son of Sirach, whom perhaps he believed to have written by divine inspiration. "Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest" (Ecclus. xxviii. 2).

With regard to prayer for external things beyond what is necessary to preserve life, Jesus taught his followers that their whole desire should be for spiritual good, which alone was worthy to occupy their thoughts; hence all anxiety and care for food and raiment should be dismissed, still remembering that the Father knows the needs of all his children, and will provide accordingly, as he in fact does for even the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. Aim, with an eye singly fixed thereon, to fulfil all righteous-

ness, and leave results with God; hence, "Trust in God and do the Right," is a compendium of a large part of Jesus' teaching.

Incidentally, he shows his love of nature, and perception of her beauties. The Jews thought the magnificence of Solomon unapproachable, and they regarded his glory with almost a religious reverence; but Jesus taught that God is so prodigal of grace and loveliness, that he gives a greater glory than appeared in the robes of Solomon to the perishable wild flowers.

It was too common among the Jews for those who were very zealous in observance of the law to be severe on others who were not so strict. Jesus pronounces strongly against this tendency. In this he is quite consistent with himself, for as actions, apparently good, may be performed from improper motives, so deeds of a doubtful character may spring from good intentions.

And as the moral worth of an action and the guilt of the doer of an evil deed entirely depend on the motives which led to their performance, and as we cannot read the heart, nor often discern the hidden motive, so therefore we should forbear to express any judgment on our neighbour, and should, at any rate, refrain from condemning the doer, if even we must the deed.

But where the life is bad as a whole, we may safely conclude the tree bad which bears such fruit. We are not called on to pass judgment in the case of

a private individual, but when a man announces himself as a prophet, or publicly teaches religion, we may know by his actions and life whether he is of God; if the fruit be evil, we are not bound to accept his authoritative teaching.

It would seem (see Matt. xii. 27) that all teachers of religion professed to cast out devils, and Jesus foreknew that many evil teachers would, for the sake of popularity (which seemed their prevailing idol), profess to cast them out in Jesus' name, as his apostles or coadjutors; but he declares that when they claim recognition from him on that account, he will, if they are evildoers, disclaim them as his disciples, and, in spite of their calling him lord and master, will repudiate all workers of iniquity.

Likewise the condition of entering the kingdom of heaven is not a profession of discipleship to himself, but a sincere desire to do the will of God. If a man has this desire and acts accordingly, he is on a rock, and his house shall stand unshaken amid all convulsions; but if he is merely a disciple outwardly, hearing the instructions of Jesus, but not pursuing righteousness from the heart, his house is built on the sand, has no stable foundation, and shall be swept away.

Such teaching (see the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in chaps. v., vi., and vii. of the first Gospel), going down to the root of the matter, was seen to be that of a master, far different from the teaching of those "sand-blind pedants," the Scribes and Pharisees.

According to Matthew, Jesus performed his cures to fulfil a prophecy: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Isa. liii. 4).

Power was given him over the elements, which power he exerted in calming the sea by a word.

Jesus was known by the powers of evil as some great one in antagonism to themselves, for the devils who possessed human beings, finding that the period of their rioting in earthly tabernacles was at an end, cried out at his approach.

Tidings of Jesus' power came also to the ears of a heathen centurion, who, fully believing therein, asked him to save his servant, and to do it by the word of command, without stirring from the spot, as he was not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof. This faith in himself from a heathen exceeded any that the Lord had met with among his own people.

Jesus now begins to speak of himself as the "Son of man," a phrase literally meaning merely "human being," man.*

He sometimes seems to apply it to man in general (Matt. xii. 8), sometimes to himself in particular (Matt. viii. 20), and sometimes to the coming Messiah (Matt. x. 23).

The prophet Ezekiel constantly represents the word of Jahveh addressing himself as "Son of man."

But Jesus has the warrant of Daniel for designat-

* "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 4). "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the Son of man, in whom there is no help [or salvation]" (Ps. cxlvi. 3).

ing by this phrase the Messiah. (?) * Did he so understand Dan. vii. 13, 14?

We may, at any rate, conclude (from this our provisional platform of the accuracy of Matthew and Mark) that Jesus is now almost, if not quite, convinced that he himself is the intended Messiah King, though he is not yet empowered to announce himself as such. The use of the title Son of man, and its application occasionally to himself, while it does not constitute an assertion of Messiahship, may yet suggest the question to his disciples.

He miraculously heals a palsied man, having previously pronounced him forgiven (presumably through discernment that he was a faithful soul and in the company of such), and he intimates to cavillers that such discernment is more within man's power than is the gift of healing. The people praised God for having given such power to men (Matt. ix. 2–8).

Jesus now calls to apostleship a fifth, viz. Matthew the taxgatherer, who also leaves his secular employment, and becomes a follower of the prophet of Nazareth.

Jesus' chief object being to convert sinners to righteousness, to bring nigh to the kingdom those who were far off, he mixes freely with all kinds of people, that he may lose no opportunity; and, not being an ascetic like John, does not shun festive occasions, but turns all alike to his purpose.

* Scarcely. The phrase "as a son of man" means simply "one like a man," though that one proved to be "no other than the Messias." (See Ewald's "Prophets," vol. v., p. 252.

He now lets it be publicly known that he is not merely continuing the work of John, not merely announcing the speedy approach of the kingdom of heaven, but is actually establishing it in individuals. He is seen by the people to be a prophet of another order, and his disciples are now accordingly distinguished from those of John, as being, in fact, of another school. John deterred from sin by threats; Jesus wins the people to righteousness by winning them to himself.

Twelve men have now been found among his disciples willing to devote themselves to the work of preaching the Gospel—that is, to announce, as John did, the speedy approach of the kingdom—and Jesus therefore sends them all over Galilee for this purpose, communicating to them his own powers over all disease and death. They are to remember by whom they are sent, and are to introduce themselves as the apostles of Jesus wherever they appear.

We are told nothing of their baptizing disciples. Perhaps the baptism administered by John had spread widely in Galilee, so that all such as truly repented had already repaired to him for baptism; or perhaps the time for Jesus' baptism, as distinct from that of John, had not yet come. In the former case, those who wished to become disciples of Jesus came from the ranks of John's disciples. It is clear that Jesus is now represented in Matthew and Mark as speaking, prophet-like, in the name of God, and that he claims submission as a prophet. His miracles and

his teaching together unite in proving him divinely inspired, and he now distinctly aims at forming a body of persons, the nucleus of the new Messianic community, who shall, by acknowledging themselves his disciples, admit him to be a messenger from God—a prophet, and as such absolutely to be obeyed. (It may be here repeated that, in this chapter, we not only give an outline of Matthew and Mark, but, provisionally, we assume the authenticity of the narration). Jesus, therefore, was God's ambassador, entrusted with plenary power, and those who believed him to be so were also bound to honour and obey him. So now, in perfect conformity with the principles of his previous teaching, viz. that devotion to righteousness, to God, must be absolute and unreserved, he demanded that those who acknowledged himself as sent by God should confess this publicly, should not only proclaim it when they could do so with safety, but were to do it at *all hazards*, even, if necessary, at the sacrifice of life itself—that is, they were to prefer the latter alternative to denying him. Those who, on whatever pretext or to escape whatever loss, fell away from him when tested, he would refuse to accept as disciples at all. They must be his to the death, or in the sight of God he would renounce them utterly. This demand would not seem an extreme one to the Jews and Galileans, for thousands of them showed at that very time, without any reference to Jesus' teaching or the Messiahship, how ready they were to die for their religion. Accordingly, Jesus expected such

fidelity from his missionaries, and sent them to preach it to the people of Galilee, distinctly telling them that before they had gone through all the towns of Israel the Messiah would appear (see the tenth chapter of Matthew). "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. x. 5–7). And "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. x. 23). "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. x. 40).

The fame of Jesus now reaches John in his far-off prison, and, wishing to know whether he is the Messiah, he sends two of his disciples to ask him. ("Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3). This is the first time the question comes distinctly before us. But Jesus, true to his original plan, tells them to form their own judgment from his teaching and his miracles; he still has no direct affirmation to make on the subject.

The Galilean prophet now freely speaks of his predecessor as—though no miracle-worker—greater than any of the prophets of old, and nearer to the kingdom of heaven. We may see, perhaps, the reason of this in that the ancient prophets generally addressed themselves to the nation as a whole, or to its rulers; no one among them so addressed individuals, nor

demanded of them personal repentance and righteousness so explicitly as John. He baptized individuals as such, and for the sake of their single souls. And then what previous prophet had exerted such an influence on the nation as John had done? The whole people had been stirred as one man. Moreover, John was not only a prophet, but a prophet pre-announced, even the Elijah that was to come, as forerunner of the Messiah.

But, on the other hand, John had not actually entered into the kingdom of heaven. He does not seem to have understood its nature. He preached to men, and exhorted them to repent and serve God in order to escape his wrath. Jesus preached of a kingdom of God in each soul; a heaven of sympathy and communion with him as the Father; of love to God and love to man. He who is thus in the kingdom, though externally one of the least, is yet greater than even John the Baptist (Matt. xi. 11). (Alas, how seldom is this ideal realized, or even realizable; yet how much nearer we might approximate towards it, if we had another Jesus—nay, if the teachers of Christianity understood him, and spoke, as they were able, in his spirit and with his power!)

Hitherto the career of Jesus has been a joyful one, one of progress only. Shadows now, however, begin to appear. He finds that numbers, after the first flush of enthusiasm has passed away, have returned to their old habits of sin; a spiritual kingdom has no attraction for them, and they vent their disappointment in

invective against the prophets thereof. John, they say, is a madman, and Jesus a sensualist. But it saddens Jesus to think that the multitude of people have no root in themselves, and cannot be permanently gained for the kingdom of God, either by fear or love. And the towns on the lake of Galilee, which witnessed the chief displays of miraculous power, yet do not lastingly repent! Surely they deserve a worse fate than the heathen who have not had the word of God preached to them.

We now come to a passage different in character from all the rest of the book, though similar to much in the fourth Gospel. Because of this, and in view of the uncertainty that attends all detail—the uncertainty as to the actual text of the original adverted to in the last chapter—we are justified in regarding it as possibly an early interpolation, or if indeed it was part of the original text of our Matthew, probably not in the author's main source. We refer to Matt. xi. 27 (see also Luke x. 22): "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." This singular passage is not found in Mark, though nothing can with certainty be concluded from that. Keim does not question that Jesus uttered something of the kind. He says, "'No one *has known* the *Father* except the *Son*, nor the Son except the Father, and he to whom He reveals it.' Thus must the utterance of Jesus have originally

sounded."* It is true, something similar is found as early as Justin, but Strauss gives good reasons for thinking that Justin quotes from some other source than either Matthew or Luke. It was probably in the original Luke (in some form), but did not the author obtain it from an unauthentic (say a Gnostic) source?

Jesus declares that man's welfare is of greater importance than external rites, temples, etc., the implements of what is commonly called the service of God, and he applies this principle to the sabbath law, which is to give place whenever its observance tends to man's injury rather than to his benefit—God's object in its institution.

He speaks of the kingdom of heaven in parables, similitudes, or short allegories, though he finds few, if any, who can trace the analogy unassisted.

The prevalent feeling when the prophet approaches a town is not that of joyful anticipation, but mere vulgar curiosity to see some miracle performed. Such curiosity he rebukes and leaves unsatisfied. Where he was joyfully received for the sake of the kingdom, there he wrought most of his "mighty works;" but in Nazareth, for example, where he was reared and well known, not being honoured nor believed in as a messenger from God, he was very sparing of miracle, or abstained altogether.†

We here (Matt. xii. 40) meet with a dark saying, viz. that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three

* "Jesus of Nazara," vol. iv. p. 57. † Matt. xii. 39, 58.

days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Of which passage Professor Maurice wrote: * "I do not understand it. . . . As there were not three days and three nights between the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord, these words clearly cannot bear the interpretation which is commonly given to them. But I do not see of what other interpretation they are susceptible, therefore I leave them."

Jesus declares that spiritual ties rank above natural. Those who do the will of the Father are his true sons, and will be acknowledged by Jesus as his brothers, rather than those who are merely born of the same human parentage.

His miracles were seldom, if ever, performed for the direct purpose of convincing unbelievers in his divine mission, but rather to do some good and needful act, as when he fed many thousands with only a little bread and fish. Faith seems generally to have been the motive power, *i.e.* the faith of the person in whose favour the miracle was wrought, as when Peter walked on the sea, and when persons were healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment.

He spoke against the Rabbinical traditions as weakening instead of hedging round and supporting the true commandments of God; and, in attacking them, he utters a principle which cuts at the root of some precepts in the Mosaic law, viz. that a man is not defiled by meats and drinks, clean or unclean. The precepts which are only of men shall perish; the

* See "Unity of the New Testament," p. 197.

teachers who cannot discriminate between the commands of God and those of men are not fit for the office they assume.

We are not informed whether the twelve apostles visited all the towns of Galilee or not, but we find them again with Jesus, who asks them what is the prevailing opinion respecting himself (among those who believe in him). They tell him, some believe him to be John the Baptist, risen from the dead, and others Jeremiah or Elijah ; none as yet, it would seem, believe him to be the Messiah. But now, for the first time, Jesus asks the apostles their opinion. Simon declares him the Messiah, on which he is pronounced blessed, as having spoken by revelation from God, since Jesus himself had never taught him, nor had ever claimed this exalted office. But now it seems to come almost as a revelation to Jesus himself, *i.e.* from God to him and Peter simultaneously, removing any lingering doubt he may have had on the subject.

He thus tells the apostles that he is the Messiah, the king, and that his disciples will form his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven so long foretold. When the kingdom is thus externally constituted, it will be built on the allegiance of its subjects ; only those will be of the kingdom who acknowledge the king, as Simon has just done. *But not yet ; they are not yet* to make the fact of his Christhood public.*

Simon, in token of his having laid the foundation, and being the first to own allegiance, is himself

* Matt. xvi. 20.

to be regarded as the foundation of Jesus' spiritual realm, and is to be henceforth called a rock or stone (Kepha = Peter), and is to be invested with the powers of the kingdom—the miraculous powers of loosing persons from disease, Satanic possession, etc., or of leaving them bound therein (Matt. xvi. 13–20).

Jesus now explains to his apostles from time to time the mysterious allusion to the Son of man having to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, as that he must himself be put to death at Jerusalem, and be raised from the dead on the third day. (For unless he first went to heaven, by dying or otherwise, how could he come thence, as represented in Daniel?)

But Simon Peter is not prepared for this, and tries to dissuade the Master from putting himself in danger. Jesus, however, perhaps being tempted to avoid this death, reprimands Peter as coming in aid of the tempter, instead of acknowledging that the divinely-ordained plan was best, and strengthening his Master to pursue it. Moreover, they must themselves be ready to follow him to death, on pain of being cut off from the kingdom. For when he comes in glory with the angels, he will be the judge of all men. And this will certainly happen before some of them die, some of those who were standing around him. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall he render to every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no

wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." *

A few days after this, Jesus took the three principal apostles, Peter, James, and John, apart from the rest up into a high mountain. And they there saw the apparitions of Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus, on whom a glorious light shone, a visible anointing from on high. There also came over them all a wondrous bright cloud, and out of it a voice, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him." This so terrified the three that they fell on their faces ; but Jesus bade them arise and not be afraid, and on looking up they found themselves alone with him. But he strictly forbade their mentioning the circumstance, till after he should be risen from the dead.

The apostles now began to speculate as to who should have the highest place in the kingdom. It may be presumed that the miraculous powers promised to Peter had already been promised the others as well, and that they were now on an equality, except that Peter, James, and John were most favoured by the Master. But Jesus reproved them, and told them that unless they became changed, by discarding all self-seeking and becoming humble as a child (say specially as one whom he then called and placed amidst them), they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven at all. How very little they seemed to have profited by his instructions!

* Matt. xvi. 27, 28.

Children were brought to Jesus by their parents that he might place his hands on them and bless them: this he delighted to do, though the morose disciples were displeased with those who brought them. The kingdom of heaven was like such little children, Jesus said. When he transmitted to the apostles the miraculous powers of the kingdom, he told them that if two of them agreed to ask of God the same thing, whatever it was, their request would be granted. This in virtue of their connection with himself, no matter whether he were present in the body or not.

Jesus did not court flattering titles. He would, unquestionably, rather have been accounted good than great, but he rebuked a rich young man who addressed him as Good Master, since only God was (wholly) good. The way to eternal life, Jesus told him, he knew already, and reminded him of the commandments of God; not the ten, but the moral commandments only, or those of natural morality, whether among the ten or not. And, if he desired perfection, he was to sell all his goods, give them to the poor, and become a follower of Jesus. But this was too much for the young man; he could not part with his riches. So Jesus told his disciples that riches were a great hindrance and clog, making it almost impossible for the possessors to enter into the kingdom, *i.e.* to become humble, meek, and obedient as *little* children.

Peter asks what will be the reward (in the kingdom of heaven) of those who have left all to follow their Lord. Jesus says the twelve, having done so, shall be

judges of the twelve tribes of Israel; and that all his disciples shall receive, in this age, a hundredfold for what they have renounced for his sake, and in the next shall become immortal.

James and John, however, are not satisfied with separate thrones equal to the other apostles; they aspire to be above them all, and to sit, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, of the King—Jesus.

But such pre-eminence, Jesus tells them, is not in his power to give. God has already prepared it for those whom he has chosen; but the servant of all, he shall be chief, as he himself is, for he is about to give even his life for the ransom of many.

These conversations took place on the way to Jerusalem, and on leaving Jericho Jesus is hailed as Messiah by two blind beggars, to whom he restores sight. He enters Jerusalem, sitting on an ass,* as predicted of the Messiah. This is his first public assertion (and this by act rather than word) of the Messianic dignity; and here is no display of regal pride, but rather a confirmation of his teaching, that the prime condition of entering the kingdom is lowliness and meekness of spirit.

But the prophet of Nazareth, who is expected in Jerusalem, and whose approach in this manner, attended by a great number of disciples, has at once suggested the ideas of Messiahship, is surrounded by

* Mark xi. 7. Comp. Matt. xxi. 7, and ask, O serious reader,—Wherefore this difference?

eager multitudes, who proclaim him their anointed king, of the house of David (Matt. xxi. 1–9).

Jesus tacitly accepts the homage, and the fact is noted by the chief persons of the Pharisaic sect, and by the chief priests (mostly Sadducees). He kept on his way to the temple, followed thither by a great crowd, of whom many, especially children, continued to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" to which a parallel cry would be in England, "Long live King Jesus!" As was natural, "All the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. xxi. 10, 11).

Arrived at the temple, Jesus, scandalized at the noise of the traffickers in the outer courts of the sacred edifice, authoritatively cleared them—the people who accompanied him perhaps doing his bidding, by upsetting the seats of the traders, and hustling them out—after which he cured many blind and lame persons who resorted to him.

He lodged at a suburb of the city called Bethany, and as he re-entered Jerusalem on the following morning, he wrought a miracle of an exceptional character, viz. that of causing a fig tree to wither under his curse—a curse not causeless, since the tree, though bearing leaves, had no fruit. When the disciples expressed their astonishment, he told them that all things were possible to the prayer of faith. If they had faith, it would be in their power to work still greater wonders than this, even, for example, "If ye

shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up, and cast into the sea, it shall be done" (Matt. xxi. 21).

Jesus went again to the temple and taught the people, who there flocked to hear him; but his acts of the previous day were called in question by the chief priests and other influential persons, who demanded on what authority he acted. They had previously directed the attention of Jesus to the claim made on his behalf, by the more enthusiastic of the people, contained in the popular cry taken up by the children and long-continued, and Jesus, quoting from one of the Psalms, intimates that children are sometimes more discerning than their elders.

But when these elders demand his credentials for the tacit assumption of Messianic authority, he silences them by placing them in a dilemma respecting John the Baptist, in whose prophetic mission they did not believe, but shrank from avowal of their disbelief for fear of losing their reputation among the people, who still regarded John as a prophet.

Jesus now began to denounce the Pharisees and the religious teachers as worse than the tax-gatherers and harlots, and declared that they would not be permitted to enter the kingdom. He knew, apparently, that these men, haughty and overbearing, full of self-seeking, would never comprehend the nature of the true divine kingdom, which must be established within their hearts before they could be admitted into the outward kingdom of the Messiah, consisting of the converted only. He therefore

threatens them with punishment, and so exasperated them that they would have seized him, but that they knew the people were favourably disposed towards him.

Being afraid to arrest and condemn him themselves, they sought to embroil him with their Roman masters, supposing, if he claimed the Jewish throne, their task would be easy. But, seeing their intent, Jesus, to their signal discomfiture, evaded the question which, with that object, they proposed.

To the Sadducees, who had tried to puzzle him on the subject of the resurrection of the body, he preached a spiritual resurrection only, instancing the chief patriarchs as living still.

His having silenced the Sadducees would be likely to incline the Pharisees rather towards him, or to make them more ready calmly to test him. Accordingly, one of them, a student and expounder of the law, asked him which was the great commandment therein. Jesus replied, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 37–40).*

* On another occasion, also, Jesus epitomized the teaching of the law and the prophets (see Matt. vii. 12): "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."

The Pharisees appear to have listened respectfully on this occasion, and Jesus now, in his turn, questions them, asking their views of the descent or ancestry of the Messiah. They reply, in accord with the common belief of the Jews, that he must be descended from David. But Jesus combats this idea, perhaps knowing that there was no evidence of his own descent from the royal line, and his argument made on them so great an impression that they dared not encounter him any more.*

Some time now elapsed, during which Jesus remained in Jerusalem quietly teaching, and observing the conduct especially of the religious teachers and the Pharisees, who laid claim to especial sanctity. He saw and heard much that aroused his indignation, and he at length denounced these classes of persons (held in high esteem by the people) with great severity, and publicly exposed their faults. He accused them generally of hypocrisy, in pretending to righteousness when they were full of secret uncleanness and iniquity, and, calling them a brood of vipers, asked how they could possibly escape condemnation.

It is, however, more and more apparent that the people of Jerusalem are becoming alienated from the Galilean prophet. Those who welcomed him with shouts are now silent, and the cry is soon to be heard,

* Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ? whose Son is he?" They reply, "The Son of David." But David reverences him as his superior, calling him lord. Would he thus, in spirit, do homage to his own descendant? "If David then calleth him lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. xxii. 41–45).

either from their lips or from those of the formerly silent among the crowd, "Away with him; crucify him." Jesus sees no signs of good, and sadly predicts that the whole city will be destroyed (Matt. xxiv. 1–28). He also foretells the coming of the Messiah in glory, and the end of the present system of things, both directly after the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30). "But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:* And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."† "Verily I say unto you" (Matt. xxiv. 34) "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished."

Jesus has, at length, thus followed John the Baptist in re-echoing the denunciations of the prophets, foretelling the calamities that should overtake the wicked in the great day of the Lord. The Word of God has gone forth against the heavens and the earth; this word will not return unto him without having accomplished all that it is sent to perform. Heaven and earth, therefore, must pass away, for the word of God cannot pass away.‡

But though all these woes should fall on that

* See Joel ii. 10. † See Dan. vii. 13.
‡ See also Isa. li. 6; Ps. cii. 26.

wicked generation, the precise time is unknown by prophets, even by the angels in heaven—is known by God only (Matt. xxiv. 36; see also Mark xiii. 32).

But when this judgment comes it will be unexpected. Jesus exhorts his disciples to be prepared, and to constantly watch, that they may be so. He is going to die in order to come again to be their king, their judge, and he will specially judge them in reference to their life and actions during his absence. The Master finishes with a wondrous description of the final judgment, when the Son of man (that is to say, himself, though only the disciples, perhaps only the apostles, would as yet understand this) shall sit on his throne, surrounded by the angels, and shall judge and pronounce sentence on all mankind, condemning the wicked to eternal fire, and rewarding the righteous with eternal life.

The humility of the kingly judge is shown most strikingly by his calling even the meanest and poorest his brethren, and entirely identifying himself with them, so that whether good or evil is done to them, he regards the act as done to himself.

The religious directors of the Jews now determine to take Jesus and arraign him. He sees the storm gathering; also that Judas, one of the twelve, will betray him to them. He again foretells his death and resurrection from the dead, and promises that when he is risen he will go into Galilee before them. He also predicts that Peter will deny him; but Peter and

all of them declared they would not, though death were the consequence.

Going with his disciples to a certain secluded spot on the Mount of Olives, Jesus retires apart from them, that he may face the great crisis of his life, alone with God. The prospect before him was death, a public and shameful death in the prime of life, unless he renounced all claim to Messiahship, or skilfully evaded the questions which would be put to him. But he fully believes he is the Messiah, the first therefore is out of the question; the cup can only pass from him by the interposition of God, who could, by a miraculous display of power, vindicate his Anointed. Jesus, then, earnestly prays that this may be done, *if possible.* He knows it is not possible for God to lie, therefore if God, by the prophets (Daniel, for example), has declared it necessary for the Messiah to die first a violent death, that he might rise again (thus bringing immortality to light), ascend into heaven, and come thence in glory, then it is not possible for the cup to pass from him. He only prays, then, because he is uncertain as to the meaning of some of the prophecies respecting the Messiah; he is not sure that it is prophesied of him that he must first die.* But in any case, he is perfectly resigned to the Divine Will.

It is, however, all-important to him to know the true meaning of the Scriptures concerning this matter. If the Messiah's death is not therein predicted, even if it be not the Divine will to avert Jesus' impending

* The fifty-third of Isaiah was not understood to refer to the Messiah.

death by miracle, it may still be possible for him to disarm the anger of his accusers, or at least to render them powerless by demonstrating his own innocence of any offence against either the Jewish law or the Roman dominion.

If, on the other hand, he were assured that the death of the Messiah is predicted, Jesus is fully prepared to meet death with composure—yea, with joyful alacrity, since he rejoices to do the will of God.

But it is the uncertainty that agonizes him. It is the doubt as to the true meaning of certain prophecies which renders it so difficult for him to determine the path of duty in this great crisis of his career.* In the other great temptations that beset him, the path of duty was clear—he had only to summon his moral strength to repel the tempter; but the supreme agony of this hour is that the light divine, which should show the path of life, is clouded. Nevertheless, he has light for the present moment; he must continue pleading with God, wrestling with him, till he give the needed indication of his will, and he (Jesus) does so. He is, in this terrible trial, still true, absolutely true, to God and righteousness. We must judge from the result that he was confirmed in the belief which he had often expressed before to his diciples, viz. that it was necessary for him to die, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (Matt. xxvi. 24–31).

* These views of ours, as to the cause of the mental suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane, we hold as most legitimately deducible from the narratives. See the foregoing and succeeding pages. We do not, however, regard our inferences as the only possible ones.

Therefore, when Judas brings the officers to arrest him, he forbids resistance, saying to one who used the sword, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 53, 54).

The disciples, however, losing faith in his Messiahship, or else overcome by terror, all save themselves by flight.

Jesus is now brought before the Sanhedrim, and falsely accused of having incited the people to the destruction of the temple, professing power to build it again miraculously. True to his idea of the will of the Father, he preserves a dignified silence. The high priest then, in the most solemn manner, adjures him to tell whether he professes to be the Christ. Jesus at once, and now for the first time, publicly declares his Messiahship, and that he will come in the clouds (as predicted in Daniel). The high priest, deeming this confession a proof of guilt, solemnly rends his garments, and the whole Sanhedrim concurring, Jesus is adjudged guilty of death for blasphemy.

The crowd now subject him to many indignities; and Peter, who had followed at a great distance, when Jesus was brought before the high priest, being arrived within the precincts of the palace, is recognized by several as one of the disciples of the condemned Nazarene, but the terrified apostle disavows all knowledge of his Master. The accusation, being persisted in, is

somewhat confirmed by the provincial dialect of Peter, proving him to be from Galilee, and probably but recently come to Jerusalem. But he still denies, even swears that "he does not know the man," and breaks out into violent anger; but being reminded by the crowing of a cock of his former boast, and of Jesus' prophecy of his unfaithfulness, he goes out into solitude, and with bitter tears laments his cowardly and faithless conduct.

When Jesus is brought before the Roman governor, he pursues a course similar to that he took before the high priest, acknowledging himself the Anointed King predicted by the prophets, but preserving silence on all other matters.

Pilate is convinced, however, that there has been no overt act on Jesus' part, showing intention to conspire against the Roman power, and wishes to release him. But the Jewish priests and the crowd all clamour for the execution, and Pilate gives way. The chief idea of the accusation in the mind of Pilate is that Jesus has asserted his own right to the Jewish throne in opposition to the Roman supremacy, and as some colour has been given to this by the admission of Messiahship, Pilate had the accusation publicly displayed on a board: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. xxvii. 37).*

After being subjected, during his journey to the place of execution, to many insults, he was crucified

* For variations in the synoptic accounts, see also Mark xv. 26, and Luke xxiii. 39.

between two thieves, and the accusatory inscription was placed over his head. The spectators taunted him as an impostor, as did even the thieves who were crucified with him. During the time of the crucifixion the sky was densely covered with clouds, so that there was "darkness" over all the land. This would seem to have had its effect on Jesus, in his state of bodily weakness and mental straining after some certain token of Divine interposition; his spirit sank, and in the words of the Psalmist he pathetically exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. xxii. 1).

At the moment of his death there was an earthquake. The veil of the temple was rent, and even the graves opened, so that when (after Jesus' resurrection) many of the dead came again to life, they easily obtained egress, and went into Jerusalem, appearing to many of its inhabitants.

Jesus went to Galilee, as he had predicted he should (having first made himself known to two women, Mary of Magdala and another Mary), where he appeared to the eleven disciples on a mountain; but some doubted whether it was really himself. On this the risen Saviour advanced and spoke to them, telling them that all (Messianic) power had been given him in heaven and in earth, and commanded them to go into all nations and make disciples, on the basis of his Messiahship, initiating them by baptism, which was to have reference to three important truths, viz. (1) The existence and providential government of

the one God, the Father of all. (2) Obedience to his will as revealed by his Anointed, who is to be regarded as his representative and as his beloved Son. And (3) The sign and proof of the actuality of this divine Messianic kingdom, the communication of the Holy Ghost linking earth to heaven, overcoming all obstacles but those of will, and rendering the recipient able to fulfil the commands of the Messiah, or, in other words, to do the will of God.

They were also to teach all that their Lord had taught them, and he would be with them constantly even to the end—until he came again in person, in visible possession of the kingdom.

The foregoing is a rapid statement of the leading features of the history of Jesus, according to the first two Gospels, especially as regards his relation to the Messianic expectations of his nation at the time in which he lived.

We defer all comment till after we have dealt likewise with the fourth Gospel, though still more cursorily.

CHAPTER V.

THE JESUS OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

WHILE John was on the further side of the Jordan, baptizing in its waters, and announcing the near approach of the Messianic kingdom, and that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit; while he was yet ignorant who was destined to be this anointed King of Israel;—it was revealed to him that the Spirit would visibly descend on the Messiah, and remain on him, and that John himself should witness this anointing with the Holy Ghost, and thus be certified as to the Christ (John i. 33).

Accordingly John did see the Spirit come from heaven, in the form of a dove, and saw it alight on Jesus, and rest on him (John i. 32).

John therefore publicly proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah—Christ (John i. 34).

Before he had thus proclaimed him, the Jews had sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to inquire of John his own relation to the Messianic kingdom. Are you, they asked, yourself the Christ? or are you

the Elijah foretold by Malachi, who should come to prepare the people for the kingdom? * or are you that prophet foretold by Moses? †

To each of these queries John answered distinctly and emphatically in the negative. He told the inquirers that he was neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor that prophet (John i. 19–21).

Well then, said they, if you are neither the Christ, nor the Elijah whom God is to send to convert the people, nor the prophet who is to deliver the commands of God, why do you take on yourself this office of calling the people to baptism? In what possible relation can you stand to the kingdom? What answer shall we take back to Jerusalem, to the chiefs of our sect, the Pharisees?

John reminded them of a passage in Isaiah (xl. 3), speaking of a voice crying in the desert—"Make straight the way of the Lord."

I, said he, am this voice. I have no power to convert; I can only call, implore you to be converted, to testify your willingness to be converted by coming to my baptism. I only baptize in water; but there is one among you, though you do not know him, who shall baptize with Holy Spirit and take away your sin.

The next day, seeing Jesus approach, John pointed him out to the people as the very Christ, the Anointed One, whose coming he had been announcing—the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world, and to baptize with the Holy Spirit (John i. 29, 30).

* Mal. iv. 5, 6. † Deut. xviii. 18.

John told them, also, that he himself did not know the Messiah till he saw the divine sign fulfilled, for which he had been previously instructed to watch, viz. the heavenly dove—the Holy Spirit—coming down and remaining on him.

The day after this, as John was with two of his disciples (one of them being Andrew, the brother of Peter), he instructed them as to the exalted spiritual rank of Jesus, who had just passed by. On which they left John, and went after the Messiah, saluting him as Rabbi, and asking him where he lived. On Jesus inviting them to go home with him, they did so, and remained for the day.

But first, Andrew went to seek his brother Simon, and brought him also to Jesus, telling him what a discovery had been made, viz. of Jesus being their King, even the long-promised Messiah.

Jesus looked on Simon, and told him that, though his name was now Simon, he should hereafter be called Cephas—that is, a rock (Peter) (John i. 42).

The next day Jesus wished to go to Galilee, and finding a fellow-townsman of Andrew and Peter, named Philip (all three being of Bethsaida, on the Galilean lake), he desired Philip to accompany him.

Philip did so, and began to spread the news that the Messiah, predicted by Moses and by the prophets, had appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph (John i. 45). Nathanael, to whom he made this announcement, was at first incredulous (since Nazareth was not mentioned in any of the

prophets, as designed to contribute to the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, much less to be the cradle of the Messiah himself), and asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip advised him to see Jesus, and judge for himself. He came, and Jesus pronounced him a true Israelite, free from guile. Jesus knows me, then, Nathanael thought; how can this be? and did not forbear expressing his astonishment. Then said Jesus, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (John i. 48). All doubt now vanished from Nathanael's mind, and he said emphatically, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel" (John i. 49).

Jesus told Nathanael that henceforth he should be an eye-witness of the intercourse he, the Son of man, had with heaven, by seeing the angels coming to him from thence and returning (John i. 51).

On the third day Jesus performed his first miracle at a marriage-feast at Cana, in Galilee, by turning water into wine. His mother was there, and his disciples had been also invited. It appears that Jesus' mother expected her Son to do some marvellous thing, for she had charged the servants to act according to all his instructions; therefore, when he desired them to fill six large stone pots with water, they readily obeyed. The wine was pronounced of the first quality, and this proof of Jesus' power confirmed the faith of his disciples in his Messiahship.

After this, Jesus, with his mother, brothers, and disciples, went to Capernaum; but they did not stay

many days, it being near the time of the Passover feast. So Jesus went to Jerusalem, and being shocked at the sight presented by the temple yard, and the noisy chaffering of those engaged in buying and selling the animals for sacrifice, he made a whip with some cord, and drove them all out, overturning the tables, money and all. But his disciples remembered that it was spoken of the Messiah (Ps. lxix. 9) that he was consumed by zeal for the house of God; and when the Jews asked for some miraculous proof of his right to act thus, he said, speaking of his own body, though they naturally misunderstood him, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

At this feast Jesus worked many miracles, and many believed on him, one of the chief Pharisees, named Nicodemus, going to him by night, and admitting that his miracles proved him to be "a teacher come from God." Jesus replied, that no man could see the kingdom of God unless he was born from above, born of water and Spirit. Jesus also said, amongst other things, that no one had gone to heaven, except he that came down from heaven, the Son of man, that is in heaven; and that the Son of man should be lifted up, as the serpent was in the desert, so that whoever believed on him should have eternal life.

Jesus and his disciples now left Jerusalem, but still remained in Judæa, and the disciples baptized; John being still baptizing, though now on the western side of the river, at a place where there was plenty of water.

John's disciples tell their master that Jesus, to whom he bare witness beyond the Jordan, was now baptizing, and that all were flocking to him. John tells them this should be so: "He must increase, but I must decrease." I am but the earthly herald of the Christ; Jesus is the Christ from heaven. "He that cometh from heaven is above all" (John iii. 22–32).

The Pharisees, too, had had information that the baptized disciples of Jesus were more numerous even than those of John (John iv. 1), and Jesus, knowing that they had heard it, left Judæa, and again went to Galilee. "And he must needs pass through Samaria" (John iv. 4). And coming near a Samaritan city named Sychar, he sat on the edge of Jacob's well—while his disciples went in to the city to buy food—and conversed with a woman who came for water, revealing to her the fact of his Messiahship. He also told her it mattered not *where* God was worshipped, but only *how*, for "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

This woman, on learning that Jesus was the Anointed, went into the city and told what had transpired. And many of the Samaritans believed on him, and returned with her, and pressed him to come into the city among them. He did so, and stayed there two days. And many more believed on him, and said to the woman (John iv. 42), "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for

ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

After the two days, Jesus went on to Galilee, and was received by those Galileans who had seen what he had done in Jerusalem. And coming to Cana, where he had effected the transformation of the water, he was applied to by a nobleman to cure his son, who was ill of a fever at Capernaum, and near death. Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." But without going, he spoke the word, "Thy son liveth;" and the father found, on inquiry, that the fever left his son at the precise time the words were spoken. He therefore, with all his family, believed on Jesus (*i.e.* in his Messiahship). This was the second Galilean miracle.

After this, Jesus went again to Jerusalem to another feast, and the Jews persecuted him because he had miraculously cured on the sabbath day a man who had been ill—palsied—for thirty-eight years. But Jesus replied, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Then they wished to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but had represented himself as equal to God by calling God his own father. Not that he meant to do so, but such was their misapprehension of his meaning. Jesus showed them that equality with God was not implied in the idea of Sonship, for all the power the Son had was bestowed on him by the Father—power to work miracles, and to judge mankind, yea, and to raise the dead; for "the hour cometh, and now is, when the

dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). But the Jews, only seeking honour from men, and not loving God, could not believe on the Son, though the evidence of his Messiahship so abounded. There was first, the evidence from prophecy, for Moses, in whom you believe, "wrote," said Jesus, "of me;" secondly, there was the distinct testimony of John the Baptist, in whose light for a time you rejoiced; and yet more than this, there is, in the third place, the proof that the Father has sent me before your eyes, in the miracles which, by his power, I work.

After this, Jesus went beyond the lake of Galilee, followed by vast numbers of people, because of the miracles he had wrought in healing the sick. ("Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand," John vi. 4.) And here Jesus wrought the "mighty work" of multiplying the bread and fish (five barley loaves and two small fish), so that after satisfying the hunger of five thousand men, there were still left twelve baskets full of the broken victual.

This miracle had such an effect on them that they declared him the Messiah, and would perforce have made him king; but he, seeing this, left them, and went into a mountain alone. In the evening the disciples went down to the lake, and took a boat to sail across to Capernaum; and as Jesus was not come, they sailed without him, and were a good way across when he came to them, walking on the water,

and having got into the boat, it immediately arrived at Capernaum. The next day some of the people from the other side of the lake came across to Capernaum to look for Jesus, and they asked him what they ought to do to work the works of God. Jesus' reply was (John vi. 29), "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." He also spoke of himself as the Bread of Life, given from heaven by God for the life of the world. Unless they ate the flesh of the Son of Man, and drank his blood, they could have no life in them. His flesh and blood, given for the life of the world, were truly meat and drink from heaven. And whoever saw the Son and believed on him should be raised up by him at the last day, and have everlasting life. He would not cast out one who thus came to him, for none could come unless taught of God to do so—drawn to him by the Father. This, and much more to the same effect, Jesus taught the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum. But they understood him literally, and were much perplexed; and even many of his disciples, thinking they were actually required to feast on his flesh, said dejectedly to each other, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

But Jesus knew their thoughts, and knew from the beginning who would and who would not truly believe, and who should betray him, and asked them if they were offended at what he had been teaching; what if they were to see him ascend to heaven, whence he came? As to the flesh, that profiteth nothing;

only spiritual food could feed the spirit, and his words (his teachings) were spirit and life.

But such doctrine they could not receive, as Jesus knew they had not the power given them by the Father thus to come to him, so many of his disciples from that day fell away from him. He then asked the twelve if they also would leave him. Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John vi. 66–69).

Jesus told them, alluding to Judas Iscariot, that though he had chosen them, the twelve, he knew the faithlessness of one of them.

The Lord had not attended that Passover feast because the Jews sought to kill him, but it being now the feast of tabernacles, his brothers (who did not believe on him) reproached him for remaining in Galilee idle, such inaction being in their eyes inconsistent with his claims. He, however, went up to Jerusalem afterwards alone, and taught publicly in the temple yard, the people being much divided in opinion respecting him, though it was not safe to speak openly in his favour, for fear of *the Jews*, who wanted to kill him. Yet the Jews came about him, and listened with astonishment, wondering how he could, without learning, have acquired his knowledge.

Jesus told them he was taught by God, and they, if they really wished to do God's will, would recognize

his teaching as from God. But the Jews, Jesus said, were bad; not one of them (at least, of those to whom he was speaking) kept the law of Moses, in whom they believed (John vii. 19).

But many of the people believed on him because of his miracles, and when the Pharisees and chief priests knew it they sent officers to arrest him. But Jesus said he should not be long there, but should return to him that sent him; they would search for him, but would not be able to come where he was. But, as usual, they (the Jews) were quite ignorant of his meaning.

On the last and great day of the feast, Jesus cried to the people, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," explaining that those who believed on him would become, according to the Scriptures, fountains of living water. The officers sent to take him returned without having done so, overawed by his teaching; for he spoke, they said, as never before man had spoken. The people, too, many of them, recognized him as a true prophet, and some affirmed him to be the Christ; but to others the fact of his Galilean origin was a stumbling-block, as it was to the Pharisees, who pronounced the believing people cursed for their ignorance.

Jesus continued teaching, going at daybreak to the temple. He told the Pharisees he was "the light of the world." But they answered that when a man praised himself, his estimate was not to be taken. Jesus told them there was another witness for the

fact, viz. the Father who sent him, and two witnesses were enough, as their law acknowledged. Where, then, is your Father? they inquired. To which Jesus replied, "Ye know neither me, nor my Father: if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also" (John viii. 19).

He also announced to them that he was from above, they from beneath, and if they did not believe him to be the Messiah, as he had told them he was from the first, they would die in their sins; but he said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he" (John viii. 28). The Father, he said, is with me, for I always do what pleases him. These words caused many of the Jews to believe on him. But Jesus is represented as speaking to those who believed on him as if they did not (as he did also at Capernaum). (See John viii. 31–59.)

He told them that, though descended from Abraham, they were slaves of sin, liars, and murderers, true children of their father, the devil, therefore. The Jews then replied, We were right in calling you a Samaritan, and possessed by a devil. Jesus answered that he had not a devil, but that he honoured God, and if any one kept his teaching he would not die while the world lasted. They said, Now we know that you have a devil, for even Abraham is dead, and so are the prophets. But Jesus told them he was living before Abraham. This so exasperated them that they tried to stone him, but he eluded them and went away.

Passing along, he saw a beggar who had been blind from birth, whom he caused to receive sight, having made clay and anointed his eyes, though the Sabbath day. The people who knew him brought him to the Pharisees, who had determined to expel from the synagogue any person who should affirm Jesus to be the Christ, and they questioned the beggar as to how he obtained sight. He replied that Jesus, who was a prophet, had cured him. They would not, however, believe that he had been born blind, but sent for the parents, who, not wishing to commit themselves to any acknowledgment of Jesus, confined themselves to stating the fact that he had been born blind, and professed ignorance of the means by which he now saw, referring them to their son himself for further information. The Pharisees, therefore, again questioned the beggar, and told him to give the glory to God, for Jesus was a sinner and could have had no part in the miracle. But the man insisted it was Jesus who had caused him to see, and that therefore he could not be the sinner they represented him, but a man of God; whereupon they expelled him. But Jesus met him, and asked him if he believed on the Son of God. On his inquiring who the Son of God was, Jesus replied, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that speaketh with thee." Whereupon the beggar believed and worshipped him.

Jesus, again teaching in the presence of the Pharisees, announced that he was the Good Shepherd, and the door of the sheepfold, through whom the

sheep were to go in and out and find pasture. The Father loved him because he was going voluntarily to lay down his life, that he might take it again. His hearers were again divided in their opinions respecting him.

It was now winter, and the Feast of Dedication, and as the Lord was walking about the temple, the Jews came to him, at Solomon's porch, and asked him not to keep them in doubt, but to say plainly whether he was the Christ. Jesus answered that he had already told them he was, and that the miracles he had done also witnessed to the fact; the reason they did not believe was that they were not of the sheep which God had given him, who follow and obey him, and would therefore never perish, for none could pluck them out of his Father's hand, nor out of his hand, for he and his Father were one (John x. 24–30).

Then the Jews tried again to stone him for blasphemy, because, they said, he represented himself as God. But Jesus denied that his words could bear the construction they sought to put on them. If he had applied the title "God" to himself, it would only be in the subordinate sense in which the word has sometimes been used in the Scriptures, as, for example, in the eighty-second Psalm, where the title is given to judges, even unjust ones (see verses 1, 2, 6, 7). "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? . . . I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are children of

the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." *

Now, the Scripture itself, which cannot be broken, calls these men gods, much more, then, would the Messiah, whom God has sanctified and sent into the world, have a claim to the title, in the subordinate sense of having a divine right to rule and judge; nevertheless, what Jesus did say, as he told them, was only that he was a Son of God, or the Son of God, *i.e.* the Christ. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, . . . believe the works; that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John x. 37, 38). Then they again tried to take him, but he escaped.

Then Jesus left Jerusalem and went out of Judea across the Jordan, stopping for some time at the place where John had at first baptized, and many came to him there and believed on him, both because of the miracles he had wrought, and because of John's testimony. While there, word came from Bethany a suburb of Jerusalem, of the illness of Lazarus, who

* According to Ewald (translated by Rev. E. Johnson, M.A.), it reads thus:—

"God stands in divine assembly,
Judging in the midst of gods.
'How long will ye to judge unrighteousness,
And with the wicked to be pleased?'

* * * * *

"I thought ye were gods,
Sons of the Highest, all of ye:
But as men shall ye die,
And at once, ye princes fall!"

"Commentary on the Psalms," vol. ii. p. 142.

lived at that place, and whose sisters, Martha and Mary, earnestly requested the Lord to come thither and save him, for they believed on Jesus, and were beloved by him, as was also their brother. But the Saviour delayed his visit till Lazarus died, on purpose that his disciples' faith might be confirmed by a striking display of his power. Accordingly, he did not arrive till his friend had been four days dead; and Martha reproved him for not having come in time, yet intimated her belief, that even now if Jesus prayed for his restoration to life, the prayer would be granted.

Jesus told her her brother would rise again. She answered that she knew he would at the general resurrection; to which the Lord replied, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" "Yes, Lord," returned she. "I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world." Mary also came weeping, and, falling down before Jesus, said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Many Jews, friends of the family, gathered round, were also weeping, and Jesus wept with them. But going to the tomb, and having prayed silently, Jesus then audibly thanked God that his prayer was heard, for the sake of the bystanders (that they might know the power to raise the dead was divine, and not diabolic), and he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And the dead man came to life, and

was restored to his friends. This striking miracle caused many of the Jews who were present to believe on Jesus; but others, apparently sceptical, went and told the Pharisees what had been done.

Thereupon a grand council was held, and though it was admitted many miracles had been wrought by Jesus, yet they feared that if all the people believed on him, and made him king, the Romans would utterly destroy their separate nationality. But the high priest Caiaphas uttered a prophecy that it was necessary for Jesus to die to save the nation, and to gather together the scattered children of God from all parts of the world.

From that time it became a question how to procure the death of Jesus, who therefore withdrew into the country with his disciples, where he remained till six days before the Passover, when he came again to Bethany. Many Jews came to see him there, and to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. On the day after his return, the Lord rode into Jerusalem on a young ass, and crowds of people came to meet him with palm-branches, hailing him as the King of Israel (Mary of Bethany had anointed his feet with very costly ointment, but only for his burial Jesus said), chiefly because of the great miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The Pharisees saw that their influence was quite powerless against the enthusiasm of the whole people.

Among those who came to the feast were some Greeks, who wished to see Jesus. When he saw them,

he told them the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified, and said that a grain of wheat, unless it died, was useless for purposes of fructification; but if it died, it bore much fruit—thus alluding to his own approaching death. Then he told them his soul was troubled; but should he then ask God to save him from the hour of death? No; it was for that he came. For being lifted up (on the cross), he would draw all men to him. He would not ask, therefore, to be saved from that death-hour, but would rather ask his Father to glorify his name, which he did ask. A voice then came from heaven in the hearing of the people, for whose sake indeed it was given: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Jesus told them the time had arrived to judge the world, and that the prince of this world would be cast out.

Some time after this, but before the commencement of the Passover feast, Jesus, being at supper with his disciples, washed their feet, as an example to them to perform similar acts of kindness to each other; and told them to love each other as he had loved them, and to show their discipleship by their love. He predicted the denial of Peter, and again his betrayal by Judas, who retired from the room.

Jesus then spoke to them many words of comfort, and blessed them, telling them that they would hereafter understand the spiritual union that subsisted between himself and the Father, for they would share it, and be able to perform as mighty miracles as he had

done, and yet greater. The spirit of truth would come to them after he had gone, would cause them to remember his teachings, and would lead them into all truth, revealing things to come. If they remembered and obeyed, they would thereby show their love, and the love would be mutual, as it is with himself and the Father. His chief command is that they love one another. The world will hate them, and persecute them, as it does himself. But they are to be of good cheer: he has overcome the world; he came from God, and is going to God. His disciples see that he knows all things, and confess their belief that he came from God (John xvi. 30).

Jesus then prayed to the Father, the only true God, saying, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that he may give life everlasting to those whom thou hast given him; that is, the knowledge of thyself, and of Jesus the Christ whom thou hast sent. This knowledge, Jesus said, he had communicated, and had finished the work given him to do, and he was therefore glorified in his disciples. He went on to pray for them, that after his departure they might be kept from the evil of the world; and he prayed not only for his present disciples, but for all who should hereafter believe through their teaching, that they also should be sharers in the mystic union, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; . . . that they may be one, even as we are one" (John xvii. 21, 22).

Then Jesus went across a brook to a garden, where

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fought; that though he was a king, his kingdom was spiritual, his subjects being those who accepted the truth he taught. Pilate, though puzzled, saw that there was no attempt to be apprehended against the Roman dominion, and told the Jews he saw no fault in Jesus, asking them if he might release him. But they were not willing.

Pilate then had Jesus scourged and mocked with ensigns of royalty (a purple robe and a crown of thorns), and presented him, thus arrayed, to the chief Jews, saying, "Behold the man," still, however, declaring him guiltless. But they clamoured for his crucifixion, because he made himself Son of God. This gave Pilate some uneasiness, and he questioned Jesus about his origin, but did not obtain an answer. Pilate, still trying to release him, was assailed by a covert threat from the Jewish rulers, implying that, if he persisted he would be accused of having shielded a pretender to the Jewish throne, and, consequently, of unfaithfulness to the empire. He therefore at last gave way, and sent Jesus to the death of the cross, writing thereon a mock title, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," which was, in truth, his accusation.

By the cross stood Jesus' mother, her sister, and Mary the Magdalene. And when he saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he commended her to the care of that disciple, who henceforth took her to his own home.

In order to complete the fulfilment of Scripture,

Jesus then complained of thirst; accordingly vinegar was given him to drink, and on receiving it he exclaimed, "It is finished!" and, bowing his head, he died.

This was on the day of preparation for the Passover, the day before the Sabbath. The Jews, therefore, wanted the removal of the bodies before the Sabbath (those of Jesus and of the two thieves who were crucified with him), and to that end wished them speedily killed. The soldiers found Jesus already dead; one of them piercing his side, there issued blood and water. They break the legs of the thieves, but, in the case of Jesus, two more Scriptures were fulfilled, viz. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced" (Zech. xii. 10); and, "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (Ps. xxxiv. 20).

After the resurrection, Jesus showed himself first to Mary the Magdalene; and in the evening of the same day, the first of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled through fear of the Jews, he came and stood in their midst, pronouncing peace on them, and conferring apostleship. And he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whosesoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven to them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Thomas, however, was not with them, and refused to believe the fact of the resurrection without seeing Jesus himself and obtaining tangible proof. This was granted him in presence of the other disciples, eight

days after, on which occasion Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

This fourth Gospel does not profess to narrate all the miracles that Jesus did, but only enough to show that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and that those who believe in him as such may have life in his name (John xx. 31.) This verse appears to conclude the Gospel, the twenty-first chapter being an appendix, narrating the appearance of Jesus to his disciples in Galilee, and his prediction of the martyrdom of Peter; it explains also how the belief arose among the disciples, that the one whom Jesus so loved would never die. The twenty-fourth verse says, "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL, BRIEFLY COMPARED WITH THE FIRST TWO.

WE have now given, in the foregoing chapters, a brief abstract of the life and teaching of Jesus—first, as described in the Gospels named after Matthew and Mark, and secondly, according to that named after John; and our next step shall be to notice some striking differences which exist between the two accounts, *easily verifiable in any version by the average reader.*

Some have deemed that the most important of these discrepancies is that concerning the day of Jesus' death, the Synoptics making it the day after the Passover, and the fourth Gospel making it the day of the Passover, so that Jesus was himself the Paschal Lamb slain. Dr. Farrar has dealt with this one particular at considerable length. "It must be admitted," he says ("Life of Christ," vol. ii. p. 475; Appendix), "that the Synoptics are unanimous in the use of expressions which admit of no natural explanation except on the supposition that the Passover *did* begin

on the evening of Thursday, and therefore that Thursday was Nisan 14, and that the Last Supper was in reality the ordinary Paschal Feast." But Dr. Farrar, notwithstanding, adheres to the Johannine account, for, he says, also in the Appendix, p. 482, "We conclude, then, that the last supper was not the Paschal meal." The translator of Dollinger's "First Age of Christianity and the Church" (H. N. Oxenham, M.A.), in a note at p. 57 of that work, makes the following remark on this question:—"The author here supposes the supper described by St. John (ch. 13–17) to have taken place on the Wednesday evening, and to be distinct from that mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels, at which the Eucharist was instituted. But this method of reconciliation creates more difficulties than it removes. And it is quite clear, however the difference be explained, that St. John assumes the Feast of the Passover to have commenced on the *Friday* evening, the day of the crucifixion (John xviii. 28), while the Synoptic Gospels make our Lord eat it on the Thursday evening, the day of the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 17, 19; Mark xiv. 12, 16; Luke xxii. 7, 13).

Another oft-noted difference between the fourth Gospel and the Synoptics is that respecting the duration of Jesus' public life, apparently about one year according to the synoptists, as Jesus only attended one Passover Feast, but about three years if we follow the indications of time given by the fourth Gospel. The most ancient opinion coincides with the Synoptic

Gospels; but, says Dr. Farrar in his Appendix to the "Life of Christ," vol. ii. p. 468, "In spite of the patient thought and consummate learning which have been devoted to the consideration, the data are clearly insufficient to decide convincingly how long Christ publicly taught on earth, nor shall we ever be able to attain any certainty on that deeply interesting question."

Besides differences of time, there are those of place, Jesus teaching mostly in Galilee according to the first two Gospels—not in Jerusalem till his arrival there for the last time, and not in Samaria at all; but the fourth Gospel makes him teach in Samaria, and several times in Jerusalem, thus giving many journeys to and from Judæa and Galilee, which the first and second Gospels omit. The first appearance to the disciples, too, after the resurrection, the latest Gospel places in Jerusalem (as does the third), but the first and second place it in Galilee.

They also omit one or two marvellous acts alleged of Jesus, as the cure of the man born blind—an act, according to the fourth Gospel, of great notoriety—and the crowning miracle of the raising of Lazarus; so that, assuming these really occurred, it is astonishing how they could have been omitted by any writer conversant with the chief facts of Jesus' life.

Sometimes when the facts are given, they are assigned to different periods of the history, as, for example, the forcible clearance of the temple court-yard, relegated by Matthew and Mark to the

latter part of Jesus' public career, but placed by John at the very beginning.

Passing now from these external matters, mere adjuncts as they are in comparison, we come to other differences, more intimately affecting Jesus' life and teachings (letting alone the prominence given to Andrew and Philip in the fourth Gospel, and that to James and John in the Synoptics, the love for friends at Bethany, and for "the beloved disciple," about which the Synoptics are silent), for example, in the Synoptics are data showing inferentially in him distinct traces of human imperfection, whereas in the fourth Gospel such marks are entirely absent.

Even to the writers of the first three Gospels the baptism of Jesus appears to have been a stumbling-block, yet they allow it to be seen that he did actually submit to "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," and that afterwards he was tempted (though not overcome) by the devil: but the fourth Gospel has no trace of either sin or temptation; in it Jesus can triumphantly ask, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" It seems to exclude the baptism, for John states he knew not Jesus till the dove descended on him, which event is, in the Synoptics, placed after the baptism. It demands that the Son be honoured *even as the Father*, but in the Synoptics Jesus does not seek to be called "good," thinking that title should be reserved for God, to whom alone it absolutely belongs. This Jesus does not know, for instance, when the destruction of Jerusalem will take

place; the Jesus of the latter Gospel knows "all things" (see John xvi. 13–15, and 30).

The Jesus of the first Gospel does not know whether it is possible for the cup to pass without its being drunk: when the hour approached, he prayed that, if possible, he might be saved from it. But the Jesus of the last Gospel (as if it were to controvert the statements of the former), when his soul is troubled, asks, "What, then, shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour, when it was for this cause I came to this hour?" And again, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" We can thus understand why the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane is omitted by the author of the fourth Gospel.

And how different the scene at the arrest! In the first, Judas salutes his Master with a traitorous kiss, and the officers come forward and take him, while the disciples all fly (after the momentary valour of one of them); but in the last Gospel there is no necessity for the kiss, nor does it take place, for while Judas was with the officers Jesus approached and revealed himself, and his majestic bearing so struck them with awe, that they went backward and fell to the ground. Jesus quietly stipulates that his disciples be allowed to go.

Thus all the differences between the fourth Gospel and the others point one way: they all tend, in the fourth, to the glorification of Jesus, to his exaltation above humanity. Even at the tomb, two angels in John take the place of one in Matthew and Mark,

while after the resurrection, though according to these the women to whom he appears come and hold him by the feet, in John his person is sacred—"Touch me not."

It is quite in keeping that, in the Synoptics, Jesus, who has been baptized by John, does not begin to make disciples nor to teach till after John has been sent to prison, and that his teaching should be, at first, only an echo of that of the Baptist (see Matt. iii. 1, 2): "In those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and Matt. iv. 12, "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee;" and (ver. 17) "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We should not expect the Jesus of the fourth Gospel to occupy such a position relative to John, but rather that in all things he would have the pre-eminence. Accordingly, *there* we do not find him following John in the simple announcement of the coming kingdom, and the consequent call to repentance (merely stepping, at first, into John's vacant place); but, while John is still baptizing, Jesus explains the second birth to Nicodemus, works many miracles in Jerusalem, and "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa . . . and baptized. . . . For John was not yet cast into prison. . . . And they came unto John, and said to him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast

borne witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him (John iii. 22–26). So that before John was imprisoned, Jesus made and baptized more disciples than he (John iv. 1). The discrepancy is all the greater if we look at the Synoptical account of John's success (Matt. iii. 5, 6). "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."

The difference between the synoptists and the author of the last Gospel in regard to the teaching of Jesus, has often been noticed.

In the judgment of our theologic statesman, "it is the works of the three synoptical writers, and not the Gospel of St. John, which exhibit to us, as far as a judgment can be formed, the ordinary and average tenour of our Saviour's life, and the true picture of its daily exhibition to the world." "Though the strain of St. John's Gospel, and of the teaching of Christ in it, is very even, the occasions and audiences are very different." The different circumstances, then, sufficiently account to Mr. Gladstone for the difference in the teaching of the fourth Gospel, except only six chapters, of which he says, "The exceptional teaching, as I would venture to call it, of our Lord among the Jewish people . . . is really contained in the six chapters from the fifth to the tenth." "All this portion of our Lord's teaching," he says, "is profoundly charged with doctrine concerning his person. It is full and large in instruction for all times and all

persons. But it seems to have been delivered to no great number; perhaps, too, within a limited space of time. It stands in marked distinctness from the general tenour of his teaching; and it stands also in contrast with that teaching as to the mode of its reception" (On "Ecce Homo," *Good Words*, Feb. 1868).

This is no distinction without a difference; for the difference is no less than that between the human and the superhuman, between the Son of man and the Son of God.

Again, speaking generally, we may say that, according to the first Gospels, the chief aim of the preaching of Jesus was to teach righteousness; but according to the fourth, on the contrary, its chief aim was to inculcate belief in himself, or to teach doctrine. It is, thus, the practical against the doctrinal; Works *versus* Faith. Exceptions may be culled from all the Gospels, it is true; but it will, we think, be admitted that the distinction generally holds good. Perhaps nothing exhibits this divergence so markedly as the two occasions on which Jesus is represented as being called on by inquirers to explain, or to state "the whole duty of man." For example, in Matthew (xix. 16–21), the question put to Jesus is, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus replies, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." Commit no murder, theft, adultery, etc. "All these things," said the young man, "have I observed: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou

hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

In striking contrast to this is the teaching of the fourth Gospel (John vi. 28, 29). When asked, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is true that in this latter case righteousness is supposed to co-exist with faith, still there is a great difference as to which is put in the *first* and which in the *second* place.*

But though these seemingly discordant utterances may by some ingenuity be made to appear reconcilable, and may, perhaps, actually be reconciled, yet other inconsistencies remain, which baffle all the attempts of the harmonizer.

In Matt. xi. 10, Jesus, speaking of the Baptist, says, "This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." (See Mal. iii. 1–5; also Mal. iv. 5, 6.) This messenger and this Elijah seem to be one and the same, having the same office of purifying and converting the Jews, before the day of retribution. Jesus accordingly also terms John the Elijah (Matt. xi. 14): "This is Elijah, which is to come." (See also Matt. xvii. 10–13.)

But Jesus nowhere in the Gospel of John calls the Baptist either the Elijah or the messenger of the

* See Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 451.

covenant, and this is not a mere purposeless omission, since, were he represented as doing so, this Gospel would not be consistent with itself; for the Baptist, whom it exhibits as divinely commissioned, emphatically denies that he is the Elijah, as we have seen (John i. 21): "Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No." And ver. 25, "Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?"

The prophet alluded to is probably the one foretold in Deut. xviii. 18, 19. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Moses), and will put words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him," etc. Now, Jesus (in the fourth Gospel) seems to represent himself as this prophet (John v. 46) where he says, "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me." The people also received him (John vi. 14) as "the prophet that cometh into the world."

For the same reason, doubtless, John, in this Gospel, is not the Elijah, *i.e.* because the function of the Elijah is performed by Jesus himself—that, namely, of baptizing with the Holy Spirit, and so converting and purifying the people. These offices, then, of issuing the commands of God, and of giving power to obey them, are here deemed too high for John; yet does John sustain a distinct relation to the Messianic kingdom, and one predicted by Isaiah—he is the voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," etc., but it is a wholly different pre-

paration from that of the messenger of Malachi. John's function, in the fourth Gospel, is to prepare the way of Jesus simply by testifying to his Messiahship. Thus, "There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came *for witness*, that he might bear witness of the light, *that all might believe through him.* He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light" (John i. 6–8). The office of John, then, was merely to bear testimony to Jesus, who alone could *enlighten* men as to the commands of God, and who alone could give power to obey those commands, and to become the obedient children of God, for "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12).

The doctrine that Jesus is the Christ predicted by the prophets, is the keystone, yea, the foundation of the whole fabric of Christianity (as the very name implies), a foundation laid before Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian Church. (See 1 Cor. iii. 11.) We have seen that as to the predicted forerunner of the Christ, the teaching of Jesus in Matthew is in irreconcilable conflict with that in the fourth Gospel; but let us approach the fundamental question—the Messiahship of Jesus—and try to ascertain what was the public teaching of Jesus in relation to this doctrine, and whether the differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the succeeding one affect also this basal rock on which the Church is built.

Yet first let us glance at the way in which John

the Baptist fulfils his office of bearing witness to Jesus. That he foretold the near approach of the Messiah's kingdom, and that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Ghost, is admitted on all hands; but, according to the last Gospel, John testified that Jesus was this Messiah (John i. 15): "John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me." And ver. 29, John "seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Again, vers. 32, 33, "And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

In the Synoptics John gives no such evidence. It does not appear therein that any one but Jesus saw the dove and heard the voice, for "the heavens were opened *unto him*" (Matt. iii. 16). He immediately goes into the desert, and remains forty days (Mark i. 12, 13). He does not begin to preach till after John is imprisoned, and, instead of John's emphatic testimony before Jesus' public life commenced, we find the Baptist, having heard while in prison of the works of Jesus, sending his disciples to him expressly

to inquire, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 2, 3). And this is all.

According to John, the mission of the Baptist was, after the descent of the dove, to give evidence, and to be a faithful witness to the fact of the Messiahship of Jesus; but of his ever having done this there is in the Synoptics not only no trace, but the first Gospel contains an inquiry by the Baptist altogether inconsistent with his exercise of such a function.

We have now to compare the Gospels in question, in relation to their accounts of the public teaching of Jesus himself as to his Messiahship.

The fourth Gospel was written "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John xx. 31). After the public teaching of the Baptist to this effect (John having been regarded by the people generally as a prophet), it might be supposed that Jesus would publicly assume the functions of Messiahship, and this he therein accordingly does. It was the Messiah's office, as we have seen (according to this Gospel), to proclaim the commands of God, and to give power, through the Holy Ghost, to perform them. He not only does this all through that Gospel (*i.e.* he gives the commands from the first, deferring the communication of the Holy Ghost till after he had been glorified), but he does it as *the Christ, the Son of God*, and that (as might have been expected from John's definitive announcement respecting him) from the very commencement of his career.

The Jesus of the fourth Gospel declares his Messiahship from the beginning, not only to his own disciples, not only to his Galilean countrymen, but to the Jews generally in Jerusalem and elsewhere, notably to some Hellenists who had come to the Passover, and even to the Samaritans. This Gospel is consistent with itself throughout. The prophet of Nazareth is therein from the beginning pronounced by John to be, what also Jesus affirms of himself, and what he is confessed to be by all believers, viz. the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; and, moreover, without this belief there is no salvation, for (John viii. 24) "except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

But turning now to the Synoptic Gospels, what do we find? "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ" (Matt. xvi. 20; see also Mark viii. 30 and Luke ix. 21). But this was at a very late period of his public life, after not only the imprisonment, but the death, of John the Baptist. What could be the meaning of this prohibition, if people already knew, both from himself and from the testimony of the Baptist, that he was the Christ?

We have already seen, however, that in Matthew and Mark there has no witness to this effect been borne by the Baptist, and we shall see that these Gospels are also throughout consistent with themselves. According to these, Jesus has never, up to this time, publicly declared himself the Christ. There is, at

least, no record in them of his having done so. Indeed, he has but just admitted it to his disciples (Matt. xvi. 13–18): "Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples [who had been sent over Galilee to announce the near approach of the kingdom, as John did, and to urge repentance, having now returned to their Master], saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist [risen from the dead, see Matt. xiv. 1, 2]; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: *for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee*, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter [a rock], and upon this rock I will build my Church," etc.

This acknowledgment, then, by Peter of Jesus as the Christ, appears here as a sudden burst of inspiration, a revelation to Peter from heaven. Peter, then, has never heard it from man, not even from the lips of Jesus himself? No, for "flesh and blood had not revealed it to him."

But this is flatly contradicted by the fourth Gospel (see John i. 40–42). "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus.

Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John [or Jonah] : thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter.") And this was even while John was in mid-career, for it was John himself who had taught Andrew (his disciple) that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Christ (that is to say, according to the Gospel in question).

These two accounts, then, are irreconcilable with each other. Besides, the people whose opinions Jesus desired to know are those well-affected towards him : his enemies term him a glutton, a winebibber, mad, possessed ; only those who are favourably disposed towards him would pronounce him a prophet. And why, then, do none of these opine that he is the Christ ? Because, as we may see by tracing the first and second Gospels through as far as this narration,* he has never been proclaimed to them as the Christ ; it has never, either by Jesus or his disciples, been suggested to them that the prophet of Nazareth was their long-expected king.

In the first Gospel, Jesus sends his twelve disciples to announce, as John did, the near approach of the kingdom, it and the king thereof being still in the future. " These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans : but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand " (Matt. x. 5–7). The Gentiles and the Samari-

* *i.e.* to Matt. xvi. 13 and to Mark viii. 27.

tans, what inheritance have they in David? What have they to do with Israel's Messiah? Only the people of Israel need to be prepared for the anointed King of Israel. So we read (Matt. xv. 24), "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But the fourth Gospel makes Jesus and his disciples not only go through Samaria, and stay two days in a Samaritan city, but Jesus announces himself as the Christ to them, and many believe on him.*

In the Synoptics, the people hear of a coming Messiah whose person is to them unknown, not even hinted at; but in the fourth Gospel, they hear of a Messiah who is among them in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

If confirmation is needed, of the disciples being sent to preach a coming kingdom, see Matt. x. 23: "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." This phrase "Son of man" being here evidently used of the Messiah.

After the disciples had fulfilled their mission, and had returned to Jesus, and, though none of the people supposed him to be the Messiah, Simon had hailed him as such, and Jesus had accordingly renamed him the Rock, the foundation-stone of his kingdom (which name is given in the fourth Gospel at the very commencement of Jesus' first interview with him), even then the disciples are to tell no one, because clearly Jesus has not yet received Messianic power and glory. He is as yet but the heir to the kingdom, the Messiah

* John iv. 25, 26; 39–42.

that is to come (see verses 27, 28 of the same chapter): "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." See also Matt. xix. 28. "In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This was uttered, according to the first Gospel, on the last journey to Jerusalem.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses, this coming is stated by Jesus to be immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, for, after predicting its overthrow, he says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Even at last, at the culminating point, when adjured by the high priest to say whether he claims to be the Christ or not, and Jesus, *for the first time*, claims Messiahship in other ears than those of his disciples, it is still virtually only the Messiah *to be*, for (see Matt. xxvi. 64) "Henceforth ye shall see the

Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

But in the fourth Gospel there is nothing of all this. That Gospel is occupied, not with a Christ that *is to come* from heaven, but with one who *has come* from heaven—The Incarnate Logos. The Baptist speaks of Jesus as "he that cometh from heaven," and Jesus speaks of himself as having come from heaven (John vi. 33). "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life to the world." Comp. ver. 35: "I am the bread of life." Also see John viii. 58, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and vi. 51, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven." Again, John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

We appeal, therefore, to "the common sense of Englishmen," in opposition to the Boyle Lecturer for 1870,* and ask, Is it not clear that, as to *Jesus' teaching* respecting the most fundamental doctrine of

* The Rev. Stanley Leathes, M.A., Prof. of Hebrew, King's College, London, who says, in those Lectures entitled "The witness of St. John to Christ," p. 71, "It is one of the rash and baseless assertions brought against the Synoptical Gospels" (he refers, as we see by footnote, to "Albert Reville, Reveu des Deux Mondes," vol. lxiii. p. 93), "that, according to their account, our Lord did not commence this ministry in the character of the Messiah, but that the conception was one which grew upon him by degrees, Simon Peter being the first to originate, and apparently to suggest it to his Master. On the other hand, it is alleged with truth that in the fourth Gospel Jesus appears as the Messiah from the very commencement. We can hardly imagine that the common sense of Englishmen will readily accept this as an instance of disagreement in the evangelistic narratives."

Christianity—the cardinal point of belief, the Messiahship of Jesus—the differences existing between the fourth Gospel and the others are so many and of such a nature as to preclude all attempts at reconcilement? He who tries to harmonize the teachings (whether of Jesus or of John) occurring in the fourth Gospel with those occurring in the Synoptical Gospels, attempts an impossible task. The differences are radical and thorough. They are such as almost to compel the belief that the author of the latest Gospel wrote for the distinct purpose of confuting the previous writers. The contradictions are too many and too obvious to be otherwise accounted for.

The first Gospel does not contradict itself; from beginning to end there is a gradual progress in the development of the Messianic doctrine (except that the episode of the two blind men is once out of place, being doubtless only a duplicate), and the teachings of John and of Jesus are in harmony.

So likewise are they in the fourth, but on quite another plane. Each Gospel, though radically contrary to the other, is throughout consistent with itself. Are they, then, mutually destructive? One certainly destroys the other. It remains to be ascertained whether the fourth Gospel is to be condemned as unhistorical, or whether the Synoptics are to undergo that fate. There is no middle course. The combination of the acid of the one with the alkali of the other will produce but a savourless, neutral salt, fit only to be cast out and trodden underfoot of men.

Between truth and falsehood there is no golden mean.

Being driven, then, to the necessity of rejecting either the first three Gospels or the fourth, we proceed to ascertain which must go. We have already noticed the dependence of Matthew on Mark, (but more probably that of Mark on Matthew, and most probably of both on a common source or sources,) so that we cannot say the evidence of the Gospels themselves is in favour of the synoptical view, as opposed to that of the fourth Gospel, in the ratio of three to one. Still, there is, if we had nothing else to determine our judgment, surely a preponderance in favour of the first three, from the fact of their plurality.

But there are other considerations which will guide us to the same conclusion, a second and a more important one being the fact formerly alluded to—of the later origin of the last-placed Gospel. We have already noticed the fact that the fourth is generally admitted to be about thirty years later than the first Gospel. That is to say, it was written at least at about thirty years greater distance from the time in which Jesus lived, and probably not till one hundred years after his death (see chap. iii.). Another consideration, which ought to have a legitimate weight with us, is that the tendency of modern criticism is decidedly against the credit of the latest Gospel.* Neander, Ewald, and similar great names, could have been quoted

* Keim said: "The historical weakness of the fourth Gospel is every day more decidedly and also more universally admitted."

some thirty years since, in favour both of its Johannine origin and of its value as history, but no names equal to those now appear on that side. A Dr. Lightfoot may be deemed "an ocean of learning" (as Chalmers, we believe, termed the Methodist, Adam Clarke), but what can we think of his critical acumen when we find him attaching such undue importance to the fact that Irenæus, when a boy, saw and heard the venerable Polycarp, the disciple of John (who lived in Ephesus), "the disciple of the Lord?" If this John of whom Polycarp was a disciple had been really the Apostle John, still the testimony of the credulous Irenæus would have been worth little; but it has been shown conclusively and with great clearness by Keim, that Irenæus confused a certain Presbyter John, of Asia Minor, with the Apostle, of whose connection with Asia Minor we know nothing. "We are quickly able," says Keim ("Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. p. 216), "to trace the delusion of Irenæus, as he disastrously transferred it from his youth to his manhood, and as it has imposed upon the so-called apologists of modern times down to Tischendorf, as if it were a sacred truth."

The external evidence for this Gospel is weaker than that for either of the others. We have no evidence that it was attributed to John till the last quarter of the second century.

Again, it should be remembered that all those who have claimed that the fourth Gospel is an authentic record from the pen of the Apostle John, have also

decided for the authenticity of the Synoptic Gospels —at all events, for their general correctness and trustworthiness as to the teaching of Jesus. Thus, while all whose opinions are worth regarding deem the "Sermon on the Mount" and the main teaching of the first three Gospels authentic relics of the real Jesus—see, for example, our foregoing quotation from Mr. Gladstone (who is a good type of the Conservative theologian), where he deems that the Synoptics represent most truly the general tenour of Jesus' life, and that the fourth Gospel gives the exceptional teaching—while all, as we said above, regard the Synoptics as in the main authentic, very many critics of the highest eminence regard the fourth Gospel as being substantially unauthentic and unreliable. The preponderance, then, of modern judgment, taking men of all shades of opinion, is in favour of the Synoptic Gospels, as compared with the fourth. There is a preponderance, taking quantity alone: if the quality of the critics is also considered, the weight in the synoptic scale is greatly increased;* and as for all those who hold both to the Synoptic Gospels and the fourth,—in our judgment, by so doing they convict themselves of defective critical sagacity, or of holding what they possess in abeyance, in not perceiving the radical contrariety and divergence between the two.

* For instance, both Strauss and Baur decided for the relative merit of the Synoptics, and especially of Matthew as against John. See Strauss' "Life of Jesus for the People," vol. i. p. 152. Authorized Translation. Williams and Norgate.

There is another circumstance, seemingly trivial, which tells in favour of Matthew. The term "gospel,"—good tidings,—was first applied to the announcement of the Messiah's speedy coming—"The kingdom of heaven is at hand." In that phrase we have the good tidings spread by the Baptist and by Jesus—the gospel of the kingdom, of which, in the last of the evangelical narratives, there is scarcely a trace. It was, therefore, *the preaching* of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God and his righteousness to which the term "gospel" originally applied, and not to a biography of Jesus, combining the incidents of his life with the teaching.

We want, then, the intermediate steps by which the designation "gospel" was transferred from the teaching respecting the kingdom to the biography. The most important link would be supplied did we know that the discourses of Jesus concerning the coming kingdom of heaven had first been published without any account of his life. Such a collection of the sayings or teachings of Jesus would very properly have been termed "the Gospel according to St. Matthew," or whoever first made the collection. It is conceivable that the incidents, real or supposed, of the life might have been afterwards combined with such a collection of the teachings, and the title "Gospel according to Matthew" still retained.

Now, the very earliest patristic authority, that of Papias, may be cited in favour of the actual occurrence of this. Papias wrote a book entitled "Exposi-

tion of the Lord's oracles" "about the middle of the second century," says the author of "Supernatural Religion," but Professor Plumptre, "Boyle Lectures," 1866, p. 41, dates it earlier, thus—"Papias (A.D. 120–140) is said by Eusebius to have written a commentary on *the words or oracles of the Lord.* This implies the existence of one or more collections. Two of these he specifies: 'Matthew wrote his oracles in Hebrew; Mark was the interpreter of Peter, and wrote what he remembered of the acts and words of Christ faithfully, though not in a formal order.'"

Alluding to these words of Papias, the author of "Supernatural Religion" says (vol. i. p. 466), "Papias clearly distinguishes the work of Mark, who had written reminiscences of what Jesus had said and done, from that of Matthew, who had made a collection of his discourses."

"According to Schleiermacher and others, the phrase 'the oracles' used by Papias denotes a collection of our Lord's *remarkable sayings* written in Hebrew, which were subsequently extended and explained by the addition of facts and circumstances belonging to time and place."*

Neander, too, says pretty much the same in his "Life of Jesus Christ" (p. 7, Bohn's series). "Matthew's gospel, in its present form, was not the production of the apostle whose name it bears, but was ounded on an account written by him in the Hebrew

* Dr. Davidson's "Introduction to the Study of the New Testament," p. 482.

language, chiefly—but not wholly—for the purpose of presenting the discourses of Christ in a collective form."

For this qualifying expression "but not wholly" the words of Papias supply no warrant. The evidence we have given above proves, as far as it goes, that the work of Matthew was a collection of the sayings, *i.e.* the teaching or preaching of Jesus (though it is likely enough to have contained indications of when and where uttered); and as we know that the preaching of Jesus was termed "the gospel," and that the term "gospel" was originally confined to the preaching of "the kingdom," there is every probability that the work of Matthew was usually spoken of as "the Gospel according to Matthew," written either in Hebrew or Aramaic, and serving as the nucleus or the primary source, as far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, of our Greek canonical Matthew. For our first Gospel, according to the most competent critics, is practically another and distinct work, whose sources probably were—for the acts of Jesus, besides floating tradition, the various gospels styled "of the Nazarenes, Hebrews," etc., and for the teachings the work alluded to by Papias,—and as it thus embodied or contained a translation of "the Gospel according to Matthew," that became eventually the only name by which the complete work was known, which work we now possess, subject to many interpolations and omissions, which do not, however, affect its chief characteristics.

Now, tradition gives no hint of any publication of

the teaching alone, other than that ascribed to Matthew, who, as a collector of taxes, is the most likely of the original apostles, as far as ability to write is concerned and as far as we are able to judge, to have committed to writing any record of Jesus' teaching. And thus it is that the substance of the teaching of Jesus contained in the first Gospel has more reliable evidence of its authenticity than that contained in the other Synoptics (where they differ), and that there is more evidence for the authenticity of the teaching than of the acts or incidents recorded even in the first Gospel itself. But when the teaching of this first Gospel is compared with that of the fourth, and is found to be wholly different and in many respects contrary thereto, we cannot hesitate for the reasons given above, and others yet to follow, in wholly rejecting anything in the fourth that is not in accord with the first, and in attaching probability to anything in the later Gospel only so far as it accords with the earlier, so that practically, as authority for the life or teaching of Jesus, the fourth Gospel is valueless, and must be dismissed from our inquiry.

Before quitting it we will, however, notice another point or two which may help to dispel any lingering doubt still remaining in the minds of such readers as have followed us hitherto.

Respecting John the Baptist we have the authority of Josephus, who may surely be entitled to the casting vote between the Gospels. Now, Josephus terms him "the Baptist," as well as do each of our Synoptic

Gospels, which, however, sometimes (especially Mark and Luke) speak of him without this appendage; but the fourth Gospel, though it contains many allusions to John, does not once, we believe, term him "the Baptist." Is this trifling circumstance of no moment? We think it has a significance, for we remember that the fourth Gospel intimates that "Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John," and that while John was alive. Why should John, if this were so, be singled out for the distinctive appellation, for he did not introduce baptism? If not generally practised among the Jews before the time of John, as is asserted by some, it was well known among them, and was in great use with the Essenes, in the very neighbourhood of the district where John laboured.

The Synoptic Gospels do not allude to Jesus baptizing at all, nor to his disciples doing so during his life.

First, then, as to the baptizing,—Josephus sides with the Synoptics. Second, as to the comparative influence of the preaching of John and Jesus during John's active life. According to the Synoptics, Jesus did not commence his till John's had ceased. According to the fourth, Jesus not only began before the Baptist was silenced, but was more popular and had a greater number of disciples than John, for, as the latter was told, "all men come to him" (John iii. 26). But John's influence is thus described by the synoptists: "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan." *

* Matt. iii. 5; see also Mark i. 5, and Luke iii. 21.

Now, in which scale must the authority of Josephus be placed? Decidedly in that of the Synoptics, for that historian represents the imprisonment and even death of John as arising out of the fear of Herod that John, because of the immense influence he had over the people, might raise a rebellion. Jesus was active in Galilee, according to all the Gospels, and Galilee was under the same Herod (Antipas); how, then, if Jesus' influence was the greater, and if Jesus was the King to whom John bore witness, how was it that Jesus was not the chief object of Herod's suspicious fears? The account of Josephus agrees well with the statements of the Synoptics, unintentionally confirming them, for they represent John as (at that time alone) having a most wide-spread influence in Perea, the other portion of Herod's dominions, which included Galilee and Perea, and as predicting the immediate establishment of a kingdom; thus the account of Josephus is confirmed by them, showing, as they do, that there really was some ground for suspicion of rebellion.

But if John merely pointed to Jesus as the baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," it is difficult to understand what there was in this (Jesus' kingdom, according to the fourth Gospel, not being of this world) to raise any fears even of Jesus, much less of John, in the mind of Herod.

Thirdly, John's chief mission in preaching, according to the fourth Gospel, was to bear witness to Jesus;

according to the Synoptics, to announce the coming kingdom, and to prepare the way for it by turning the people to righteousness. With these again Josephus is in accord, for he represents the Baptist as "commanding the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness to one another and piety towards God." But this is too like the function of "that prophet" of whom Moses wrote, and that of the Elijah of Malachi; and John, according to the fourth Gospel, was neither.

Many inaccuracies are pointed out by some eminent critics, to which we shall not allude, confining ourselves to the more obvious matters, which do not require the telescopes of the learned.

The quality of the teaching can be thus judged of, as compared with that of the first Gospel; and though we need not make the contrast so wide as did John Stuart Mill, when he condemned the fourth Gospel, or a great portion of it, as "poor stuff," while, on the other hand, he praised the "Sermon on the Mount" and the general teaching of the Synoptical Gospels as evincing sublime genius of the highest order, "personal originality combined with profundity of insight," —we shall join the great and increasing number of persons who affirm the superiority of the teaching in the earlier Gospels, and especially of that in the first. Notwithstanding the dissent of Neander, we think it is not without reason that "some recent writers contrast the thoroughly practical bearing of the Sermon on the Mount with (what they call) the mystical character of the discourses recorded by John. They

find everything in the former simple and intelligible, while the latter abounds in paradoxes, and seems to study obscurity."

We before remarked on the general character of Jesus' teaching in the fourth Gospel as compared with its predecessors, when showing the difference between them—how that the fourth was the Gospel of faith in doctrine, while they inculcated works of righteousness; we now venture to assign the superiority distinctly to the Synoptical Gospels. It is becoming more and more generally acknowledged that character —inward and outward righteousness—is far more important, yea, beyond comparison, than correctness of belief in the mysteries of dogma. As said before, it matters much whether Belief or Righteousness is put foremost.

The following passages may serve to remind the reader of this difference between the first and last Gospels. Let him weigh them carefully in pairs, and judge for himself which set contains most solid metal.

First Gospel.	Fourth Gospel.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.	He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.	He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.
Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven.	Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.	. . . That whosoever believeth on him (the Son) should not perish, but have eternal life.
Woe unto you, for ye have left undone the weightier matters of the law, Justice, Mercy, and Faith.	If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.
Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock.	He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.
If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.	Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.
After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.	No one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

"To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality." So Stuart Mill says, and he has discerned the Master in the carpenter of Nazareth, the "sublime genius" who knew how to distil from a whole literature its vital essence, the golden ball which outweighs a vast bulk of dross, "the drop which balances the sea."

These generalizations we find only in the Synoptics: they are the chief evidences of their author's greatness of perception, and show most strikingly the superiority

of the teaching of these Gospels, especially that of the first; and as it requires a Jesus to invent a Jesus, superiority here becomes a proof of authenticity.

Exception may, it is true, be taken to some of the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels, but take away such portions, and you do not injure the remainder; whereas the objectionable passages of the fourth Gospel are of the very essence of the teaching of that Gospel, being part of a system which may be termed incipient Calvinism.

The style of Jesus' alleged teachings in the fourth Gospel, and its similarity to that of the Epistles that bear the name of John, and to that of the author of the Gospel, has often been the subject of comment. The fact is plain enough, though viewed through the medium of a translation, to attract the attention of the average reader, and is alone sufficient to discredit the genuineness of the teachings of this Gospel, especially the long discourses therein ascribed to Jesus.

There are, however, those to whom this similarity presents no difficulty. Dr. McCosh, of New Jersey, for example, thus easily dismisses it:—"As to the apostle's own style in the Gospel and in his three Epistles being so like that of our Lord, we are to account for it as we explain the sameness of style in prose, poetry, and painting, on the part of pupils and the masters whom they admire." *

He is not the only one who thus "accounts for it."

* "Christianity and Positivism," p. 271.

But the fact is ignored that Jesus himself is thus made to have two distinct styles—one in the Synoptical Gospels, and one in the fourth; and, on the other hand, these superficial observers do not notice that *all* the speakers in the fourth Gospel have the precise style of the author of it. "But, finally," observes Keim, "when not only the author, not only the self-reliant prophet, the Baptist, but also the man who was born blind speaks with the language and the irony of Jesus, is it more credible that Jesus should have spoken in John and in the blind man, or that the evangelist used one speech for himself and for Jesus, for John as well as for the blind man—his speech and sphere of thought as an author?"

"It is one of the notes and peculiarities of the fourth Gospel," remarks Dr. Fairbairn,* "that the reflections of the historian often so blend with the discourses of Christ, that it is hardly possible to tell where the latter end and the former begin."

M. Renan, who pleaded for the Johannine origin of the fourth Gospel, unhesitatingly condemned the discourses as unhistorical. "If Jesus spoke as Matthew represents, he could not have spoken as John relates. Between these two authorities no critic has ever hesitated, or can ever hesitate. It was not by pretentious tirades, heavy, badly written, and appealing little to the moral sense, that Jesus founded his divine work."

Yet M. Renan thought this Gospel "represents to

* "Studies in the Life of Christ," p. 123.

us a version of the life of the Master, worthy of high esteem, and often to be preferred," and such an impression he deemed a perusal of the work calculated to give. But any of us can judge whether, as M. Renan said, "The author always speaks as an eye-witness,"—an author who writes an anonymous work, and who never speaks in the first person. One cause of the impression alluded to is the minute detail with which the narrative abounds: "it was the sixth hour"; "it was night"; "the servant's name was Malchus"; "they had made a fire with coals, for it was cold"; "the coat was without seam."

Dr. Fairbairn, too, pleads for the historical character of this document on somewhat similar grounds. For instance, alluding to the raising of Lazarus, he says: "And when we analyze the narrative, we find it too full of tender and moving humanity to be a creation of the idea. 'Now, Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.' The dropping out of Mary's name is a most significant touch, as if the stronger had absorbed the softer sister, or been to her a sort of mother or head." *

It was too much for M. Renan to ask us to believe on such slender grounds, that the son of Zebedee could so have misrepresented the teaching of his Master; but for Dr. Fairbairn to suppose that modern inquirers will, on evidence similar to that with which he supplies us in the above quotation, admit that a man four days dead, or four hours, was positively

* "Studies in the Life of Christ," p. 206.

restored to life, is to suppose that they have an irresistible predisposition towards belief in whatever transcends experience.

But to all reasoning based on the trivial, it is enough to reply that a few grains do not outweigh as many pounds; and besides, we have, as before observed, left unnoticed many points which tell on one side with greater weight than do those "graphic touches" on the other—touches which, possibly, can also be matched in the fictions of Swift or Defoe.

We have now given quite enough time and space to this comparison, and must express our undoubting conviction that the fourth Gospel was not written by a witness of the acts and words of Jesus, and that it is, as a whole, unworthy of being regarded as history; and, moreover, that though it *may* contain a few sayings of Jesus not recorded in the other Gospels, yet so much uncertainty hangs around it that nothing therein can be depended on which has not the support of the better authorities.

The fourth Gospel thus rejected, any evidence that it might have supplied of the preternatural in Christianity is gone with it. The united testimony of the Gospels we before found far from sufficient to establish the actuality of the most marvellous of the narratives, but now the evidence is become for us practically nothing. We will not, however, even yet reject the idea of miracles, but reserve our judgment till after a full consideration of the life of Jesus, and of the events which succeeded it, giving particular

attention to Paul and his testimony. Although the Gospels afford no trustworthy evidence that any events such as are commonly termed miraculous occurred in the case of Christianity, still the possibility may remain that they did occur; and if there are no incongruities in the narratives, nothing, that is to say, that makes it improbable that miracles did actually take place, we should endeavour to suspend our judgment till the whole case is before us.

What have we, then, in the life of Jesus according to the two first Gospels? We have, as before remarked, the highest teaching—mostly derived, it is true, but, then, only a genius of a high order could have seen, as Jesus did, the relative values of the various precepts and injunctions of his country's sacred literature. To the ordinary mind of that age, there was one dead level of divinely ordained rites and modes of living. Or, if one command was deemed of more importance than another, it was because it had been more emphatically enunciated—was believed to have come more directly from heaven, or to have been given under more impressive circumstances. But Jesus classifies the ancient precepts according to their intrinsic worth. He singles out two as an epitome of the whole; in effect, as a standard by which the rest might be measured. He has obtained general principles, applicable to every action of life. The whole course of a new life spreads itself out before him—a life deduced from, and therefore permeated by the influence of, these principles.

The strength of this new wine he himself exemplifies and proves in his own career. His acts and teaching correspond. He lives a life of spiritual energy, whose motive principle is love to God and man.

It remains to be seen whether this genius was superhuman; whether this life—such as we find evidence that he actually lived—is impossible to any merely human being, however highly endowed; or, whether the genius and the life are both conceivably possible to a richly endowed, a highly gifted, son of man.

If no defects of life or teaching are apparent, we must still ask whether we know every detail of the teaching and every incident of the life lived, as distinct from the life recorded (the biography), and must refuse to pronounce a character superhumanly spotless on merely negative evidence.

On the other hand, if we see aught that appears to us to be erroneous in the teaching, or defective in the character of the teacher, it remains to ask—have we the true record? And we have a right to reject incongruities and inconsistencies, (as improbable, not as impossible,) to reject anything, in fact, unworthy of the general character and acknowledged genius of Jesus; and that because of the insufficient evidence—because of our ignorance of the biographer, and of his means of knowledge of his subject.

Thus, for example, the idea of everlasting punishment for the wicked is clearly expressed,* according

* If "eternal" means "everlasting," which, however, is more than doubtful.

to the Authorized and Revised Versions, in the first Gospel (see twenty-fifth chapter). If any hold, as we do, that it is impossible for a righteous ruler of the universe to condemn one of his creatures to such punishment as "eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," he should in no case receive it as a truth revealed from heaven. For, if Jesus was infallible, there is no proof that he uttered these words. Letting alone the possibility that the author wrongly attributed them to Jesus, *or wrongly translated them from Aramaic to Greek* (and these remarks also apply to Matt. xxvi. 46), there is that other possibility of their having been interpolated. But, on the other hand, could it be proved that they actually were uttered by Jesus, then the notion of his infallibility falls with them; and, indeed, if they were deliberately uttered with the meaning popularly attached to the words, his reputation for wisdom, for clear moral discernment, must suffer also.

But, say some, if you reject the "eternal fire," you have no security for "eternal life;" they must, as revealed by Jesus, stand or fall together. Let them fall, then. It is time that the utter selfishness of those, if indeed there are any such, who would, literally and deliberately, retain the one for themselves, at the cost (to multitudes of their fellows) of the other, should be held up to contempt and abhorrence. If the "broad road," travelled by many, issues in *such* destruction, and only the "few"* reach eternal life, a

* Matt. vii. 14.

neutral terminus would be better for humanity. Under those conditions immortality would be, for man as a whole, as Theodore Parker insisted, a curse and no blessing. What a fearful strain have the hearts and consciences of many Christian persons been subjected to, in order to retain their allegiance to God and Christianity, because of the unutterably abhorrent doctrine of eternal torments! And how thankful such persons ought to be to the critics who have conclusively shown that whether Jesus uttered these words or not, the external evidence that he possessed supernatural attributes is a quantity too small to be appreciable by ordinary vision. And here one may be permitted to remark that if any man who has seriously reflected on what is implied in "eternal torment," and has obtained a realizing sense thereof, can still believe that "the wicked" *deserve* such punishment, his ignorance of human nature must be very great, or his sense of justice very little indeed.

To return from this digression. We found the evidence for "miracle" supplied by the Gospels of Matthew and Mark,—such evidence, that is, as arises from testimony of witnesses, to be practically none at all. We may now see that, in support of the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ predicted by Hebrew prophets, it is less than nothing, since the history disproves the predictions; *i.e.* proves them to have failed. To justify these remarks, we need only first refer to Matt. xvi. 28: "Verily I say unto you, There are some of them standing here, which will not taste of

death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (taking these words in conjunction, however, with the whole of Matthew preceding, and leading up to this point), and then go on to the twenty-fourth chapter, especially noticing the twenty-ninth, thirtieth, and thirty-fourth verses.

Everything points to the conclusion that Jesus did, in substance, utter these predictions. That we cannot rely literally on them is admitted, and is confirmed by a reference to Mark and Luke. There we do not find such an expression as "*immediately* after the tribulation of those days," see Mark xiii. 24, where we have "in those days, after that tribulation;" and in Luke xxi. 24, instead of the coming of the Son of man *immediately* after the destruction of Jerusalem, we find that after this event, and the slaughter and captivity of the inhabitants, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." But all the Synoptics agree that the glorious coming of the Son of man "in his kingdom" should take place before the passing away of the generation which saw the death of Jesus.*

It is enough to say that no apologist has been able to suggest any *probable* interpretation of the twenty-fourth of Matthew, other than the literal and plain sense of the words—a sense apparent to the meanest capacity, and confirmed by the whole tenour of the first Gospels. We must, then, abide by the literal sense, and in this sense it is unquestionable that the

* Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32.

predictions of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, relating to the events succeeding the destruction of Jerusalem, *have failed.*

"That the apostles and their disciples were expecting the second coming of Christ in their own time, though they were guided by a wisdom higher than their own from fixing the day or year, can hardly be said to admit of question."

"This was indeed the natural result of the language in which our Lord himself had blended the two things together—wars and rumours of wars in Judæa, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and the coming of the Son of man sitting on the clouds of heaven."*

Perhaps we have the most striking picture of this expectation in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, fourth chapter, and from the fourteenth verse: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

* Professor (now Dean) Plumptre in "Christ and Christendom," Boyle Lectures, 1866, pp. 300, 301.

When the generation had passed, and the expectation had been disappointed, some, it is true, gave up their belief in Christianity, but these were probably few. A great energy of belief, when opposed by a barrier of contrary fact, seldom or never is annihilated, it only changes its mode of manifestation. In this case we have a specimen of the process in probably the latest of the New Testament writings, where (Peter being made to predict the scoffing of those few who fell away because of the nonfulfilment of the Messianic predictions, asking, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were")* the delay in the coming of the Son of man is accounted for by the reminders that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come," etc. (2 Peter iii. 8–10).

From the manifest failure of the Messianic predictions, as understood by Jesus and his apostles,† we cannot but think it highly improbable that during his

* 2 Peter iii. 4.

† We agree with the Rev. Prebendary Row in his estimate of the relative position and value of "the Messianic prophecies," among evidences of this nature for supernatural revelation. He says (Bampton Lectures, 1877, p. 200), "Unless their fulfilment in the person, work, and Church of Jesus Christ proves a superhuman prescience, we shall in vain seek it in any other."

life on earth miracles should have been wrought to attest the truth of the doctrines he preached,—whether or not he was raised from the dead, and made a new revelation to Paul or to any of the original apostles, the probability of which may be considered, as previously intimated, after the proper life of Jesus has been studied.

We must, as already shown, form our idea of this life of Jesus chiefly from his teachings as recorded in the first Gospel, which, in the main, it is morally certain are authentic utterances of the prophet of Galilee, and there is some probability that for most of these records of his teaching we have the authority of the apostle Matthew. We say advisedly for most of them, for if indeed he published a book of the sayings of Jesus (the Logia), and if with this was afterwards incorporated many of the incidents believed to have occurred in his life, we have still no security that some teachings, traditionally regarded as those of Jesus, were not also added to those recorded by Matthew.

We shall, at discretion, avail ourselves of the latitude taken and allowed by modern critics and apologists in the matter of chronological sequence,* but whether, on the basis of Matthew and Mark, we can form any intelligible idea of Jesus without miracles,

* See Dr. Lightfoot in *Contemporary Review*, May, 1875. He says, "In fact the synoptists give no continuous chronology in the history of our Lord's ministry between the baptism and the passion; the incidents were selected in the first instance (we may suppose) for purposes of catechetical instruction, and are massed together sometimes by connection of subject, sometimes, though incidentally, by sequence of time."

perhaps remains to be seen. Any conception of his life and character that is full of incongruities ought surely to be rejected; on the other hand, any conception of him which enables us to present a picture, however coarsely and meagrely sketched, that shall have a general symmetry and congruity on the basis of naturalism, may be tolerated, as, at the least, a possible outline of the actual. For if we start with the hypothesis that Jesus was simply a man (of however remarkable genius) unendowed with supernatural gifts, we shall, in attempting to trace his career, *if he really was so endowed*, utterly fail.* A pure fiction might, it is true, be made consistent throughout with itself, but its outlines would not coincide with any that are discernible as underlying the canonical Matthew and Mark.

Before commencing to portray our own conception of the Nazarene, it may be as well to remark that the Gospels were written by persons who fully believed that Jesus was the Christ, and who believed that the designation "Son of man" properly belonged to the Christ as such; and as a comparison of the Gospels rarely shows an exact verbal agreement, we must not be surprised to find, for example, that sometimes, when

* Those modern apologists who admit the deficiency of the external evidence, place their main reliance on the evidential value of the *character* revealed in the Gospels, if that character is once accepted as historical. Prebendary Row, for instance, says of it, "If it be an historical reality, it is too clear to require argument, that he of whom it is the delineation must have been superhuman." ("Christian Evidences viewed in Relation to Modern Thought," p. 185.) He means, we presume, a character of *absolute perfection*, but is it possible for the reality of such a character to be proved historically?

Jesus is speaking of the Christ to come, he should be represented as speaking of himself. And such an expression as "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," may *possibly*, after all, instead of being an instance of "sublime egotism," have been prefaced by some such phrase as The Son of man will say, "Come unto me," etc.*

At the same time, it must be admitted that a "sublime genius," when his attention is directed to himself by way of comparison with the multitude, cannot but know his own superiority.

It is, of course, only the public life of Jesus that can be based on Matthew and Mark; any idea of his boyhood, youth, and early manhood must be obtained elsewhere. Happily, having the Old Testament, we can hardly be ignorant of the chief influences surrounding the religious education of the young Galilean.

* In this case, however, we think there are other and more probable modes of escape from any apparent necessity of imputing egotism to Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.

ORIGIN OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.*

IT will be remembered that after our consultation of the critics as to the authenticity of the evangelic narratives, supplemented by our own independent conception of the character and aims of the Galilean prophet, we found that the Synoptic Gospels, and especially the first, contained, in the main, a true portraiture of Jesus of Nazareth; while the fourth Gospel presented him differently in some important respects, on which we came to the necessary conclusion that its representations of the Great Teacher, wherever they differed from those made by the Synoptics, were also divergent from the facts, and therefore untrue. We also saw it to be a settled point that the fourth Gospel was much later than the other three, and so, having concluded that we must reject, *i.e.* deny, the historical validity of either the Synoptics

* Instead of here commencing the "Life of Jesus" from a naturalistic point of view, on the lines briefly indicated in the Appendix, we have substituted for the original Seventh Chapter a subsequent one on the origin of the Fourth Gospel, in order to make the present volume complete in itself.

or the latest Gospel, we were compelled, both on external and internal grounds, to reject the latter; and, moreover, as to the teaching of Jesus, to give a decided preference to the first of the Synoptics.

But many persons, and among them men no more credulous than Mr. J. A. Froude and M. Renan, have risen from a study of the latest Gospel thoroughly convinced, from its style and manner, of the truth and honesty of the writer, and of his being, in regard to many of the events he relates, an eye-witness. By our historian the hypothesis of conscious fraud is rejected with moral indignation; nor can he allow that the writer knowingly made free use of his imagination, or power of invention, to supplement his facts.

True, some others are convinced that they have before them a work of consummate art. Keim, for example, while admitting the good faith of the young, fresh-minded and vigorous writer, yet sees in the skeleton of the work an artistic structure, formed by a conjunction of triples, and intended to symbolize the Trinity. We cannot discuss points of this nature, but must concede that the narrative is pervaded by such an air of truthfulness as raises in the reader a repugnance to entertain the hypothesis of fraud—deliberate deception—on the part of the author.

We have no objection, at this point, to reconsider for a moment our former negative conclusion as to the apostolic authorship of the fourth evangelic narrative. Those conservative critics, if we may grant a true critical faculty to men who regard the Jesus

of the first Gospel as identical with the Christ of the fourth, the Paul of the Acts as not differing from the Paul of the Epistles, and the John of the Apocalypse as the embryo author of the fourth Gospel (who, having cast his Hebraic skin after the destruction of Jerusalem, soared aloft with renewed life into the freer air of Christian Universalism)—those critics, however, who regard the fourth Gospel as historical, place its composition in the last decade of the first century.

The "People" were told in 1842, in "Chambers's Information," that, "It is now established that he" (John) "wrote his Gospel about the year 97 or 98, when he was of an extremely old age."

Since then, however, we have been familiarized with disestablishment. Setting aside as "not proven" the conclusions of Baur, Hilgenfeld, Volkmar, and the like, who give from 150 to 170 as the time when this last of the Gospels made its appearance (Dr. Davidson accepts the earlier of these dates, while the author of "Supernatural Religion" would appear to be hardly content with the later), and also putting aside the verdict of persons who take the opposite extreme, contending for as early a date as 90 to 100, we considered the conclusions of more moderate criticism perhaps entitled to be regarded as approximately near the mark, being content to leave a margin of some twenty years, viz. between 130, the date assigned at last by Keim, and 150, that which has the sanction of Dr. Davidson.

We also saw that moderate criticism necessitated the abandonment of the theory of the Johannine authorship of the latest Gospel.

We will, however, before entirely dismissing this theory, give a glance at one or two of the arguments by which it has been buttressed. For example, Neander's dictum is that "Its form would have been altogether different had it been composed, as some suppose, in the second century, to support the Alexandrian doctrine of the Logos, as will be plain to any one who takes the trouble to compare it with the writings of that age that have come down to us." *

This, however, proves too much, for its form, being peculiar to itself, will as little suit the first century as the second, when compared with the writings that have come down to us therefrom. One is surprised at such a remark from such a quarter.

To take another instance, nearer home and nearer this present time (of those whose arguments are usually worth consideration), we have, in Dr. Sanday's "Gospels in the Second Century," pp. 343, 344, a specimen of the evidence adduced for the early origin of the Gospels. This author says, "To bring the text into the state in which it is found in the writings of Tertullian (198–210), a century is not at all too long a period to allow. . . . If the whole of the Christian literature for the first three quarters of the second century could be blotted out, and Irenæus and Tertullian

* "Life of Jesus Christ," p. 116. Bohn's series.

alone remained, as well as the later manuscripts with which to compare them, there would still be ample proof that the latest of our Gospels cannot overstep the bounds of the first century. The abundant indications of internal evidence are thus confirmed, and the age and date of the Synoptic Gospels, I think we may say, within approximate limits, established."

As all his remarks preceding this last sentence were equally applicable to the fourth Gospel, we certainly understood that *it* was meant by "the latest of our Gospels;" but this last sentence puts us in doubt. But whether Dr. Sanday intended to include the fourth Gospel or not, the vague character of the "ample proof" remains sufficiently apparent. For the manuscripts to have reached a certain stage of corruption, "a century is not at all too long a period to allow." Now, what criteria are in existence for the decision of such a question as this? How can any approximation closer than twenty or even thirty years be made in such a case?

Again, Neander says,* "It could have emanated from none other than that 'beloved disciple' upon whose soul the image of the Saviour had left its deepest impress." Of course we did not include Neander in the category of uncritical "critics," as he does not recognize the author of the fourth Gospel in that of the Apocalypse.

Neander admits that the Apocalypse is the work of a disciple of John; it is clearly by a Jew-Christian

* "Life of Jesus Christ," p. 7.

of an *im*moderate type, and doubtless well represents John, whom Paul describes as reputed a "pillar" of Jew-Christianity.

The followers of Neander, then, and the conservative critics generally, are committed to the following extraordinary series of propositions:—

1. That John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, most clearly understood and most devoutly received his "higher teaching" to the effect that Jesus, the Christ, is the Saviour of the whole world; that Jerusalem has no longer any peculiar sanctity to make it the spot whence alone acceptable worship can be offered to God, who henceforth seeks and finds true spiritual worship everywhere. The Jews, as a whole, have lost their position as the elect, the peculiar people of God, having become the antagonists of his Christ, who accordingly treats them as the enemies of his kingdom, and the foes of God—as willing servants of their true father, the devil.

2. That about a quarter of a century after Jesus' death, John, the recipient of this teaching, is found by Paul at Jerusalem, in conjunction with Peter and James—making together a trio of pillars of the Church of Jerusalem—confining their preaching to the Jews;* and this, notwithstanding that they had been commanded by Jesus, after his resurrection,† to go and make disciples of all the nations. Moreover, that the effect of their preaching on the Jews is to confirm them in their zeal for the Law, insomuch that,

* Gal. ii. 9. † Matt. xxviii. 19.

some years after, on Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, the believers were "all zealots for the Law."

3. That eight or ten years after this last visit, the Apocalypse was written by a disciple of John—by John himself according to some—and therefore, as we might suppose, by one "zealous for the Law." He deems it, without question, a matter of vital importance to be a Jew, and regards the kingdom of the Anointed, or certainly its inner circle, as composed exclusively of Jews.

But what if Christian Gentiles profess to be Jews, and yet free from the law, on the strength of the teaching of Paul?* "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter." Are not their claims summarily dismissed by the John of the Apocalypse, when he speaks of some, "Who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan"?†

For the highest place in heaven is reserved for 144,000 of the children of Israel.‡

And the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's bride, the Holy City, which descended out of heaven from God, was only for Jews, since it had "a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."§

* Rom. ii. 28, 29. † See Rev. ii. 9; iii. 9.
‡ Rev. vii. 3–8; also xiv. 1, and 3–5. § Rev. xxi. 12.

The Gentiles are the enemies of God and of his Christ, and for them are reserved the vials of wrath and vengeance; but, like as in the prophets, afterwards those left of them will submit, and will walk in the light of the Holy City, into which they will bring their tribute of honour and glory.

4. The apologetic critics maintain that some quarter of a century or more after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Apostle John, in his extreme old age, wrote the fourth Gospel, the Holy Ghost having brought to his remembrance all that Jesus had said to him of the universality of his kingdom and the antagonism of the Jews thereto.*

But what explanation do they give, these orthodox critics, of the contradictory standpoints from which the relative positions of Jews and Gentiles were viewed?

Well, Professor Plumptre is able to put forth a theory which is, no doubt, satisfactory to some.

It is that Paul, having found the Asiatic Churches better prepared than other communities to receive the truth—through the teaching of Aquila and Priscilla, and especially of the Alexandrian Apollos, who brought at least some of the thoughts of Philo—taught with greater fulness and thoroughness there than elsewhere. Then, "We have to think of the son of Zebedee coming into contact with this teaching, breathing an atmosphere of thought saturated with these ideas, and with the language which embodied them. . . . He recognizes now the working of that

* See John xiv. 26.

Gospel which many years before had been communicated to him 'privately.' . . . It falls in with all his personal recollections of the higher teaching of his master." For "there is not one of the higher truths on which the apostle of the Gentiles dwells in these Asiatic Epistles, for which we cannot find a parallel in the Epistles and Gospel of the son of Zebedee. It seems to have been part of the marvellous power of Paul's mind that he drew to himself, and within the circle of the truths specially entrusted to him, those whose minds moved more slowly, or were less bold in utterance." *

So, then, if we accept this explanation, belief in the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel involves the following, viz. :—

That John was admitted by Jesus to the most intimate intercourse, and that to him were communicated the highest truths, that he might teach them to all the world, both Jew and Gentile. That John apparently forgets them all for many years, his influence being imperceptible ; yet being taught afresh by Paul, one who himself had probably never seen or heard Jesus, except in a vision, he regains what he had learned from Jesus in his youth, but still ignores it for some forty years, and at long last gives it to the world in a volume, rendering his own testimony as a witness of little avail by suppressing, in his great modesty, his own personal share in the transactions —in fact, by hiding himself when called on to give his

* See "Christ and Christendom," pp. 354, 355.

testimony, only letting it be understood that he is the author of the book, *and was the favourite disciple of his Master.*

But Professor Plumptre apparently believes that "he who spake as never man spake," whose word was with power, and who taught John and the other disciples what we find in the fourth Gospel, was yet unable to speak so that they should understand him. It is only the marvellous power of Paul's mind that could teach even John what Jesus had vainly attempted to teach him. But having come within Paul's enchanted circle, having been privately taught by Paul, though his teaching, too, had lain dormant in his mind, he at length, after he has sojourned many years among the Asiatic disciples, learns from *them* the Pauline evangel, and remembers that he himself had some sixty years before been taught the same Gospel by Jesus the Christ.

Is this criticism, or is it the exercise of that faith which removes mountains? Moreover, these difficulties in the way of acknowledging the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel would exist, even were it certain that it truly records the teaching of Jesus; but it is admitted that much which we find therein "stands in marked distinctness from the general tenour of his teaching," and we have already ourselves, following Baur and many others, seen reason to reject it as not truly representing the Nazarene.

Can we, then, regard the utterances of the fourth

Gospel as the teaching of Jesus according to John, when it differs vitally, *i.e.* in reference to the burning questions of the first century, both from the true and acknowledged teachings of Jesus, and from those we have every reason to attribute to John?

That they are in such accord with the teaching of Paul shows us the true path out of the labyrinth.

The style of the fourth Gospel is such as to confirm the views which we get from study of its main contents.

Is it that either of Jesus (the Jesus of the Synoptics) or of the son of Zebedee?

"Paul," says Mr. Matthew Arnold,* "was a highly educated man, and yet Paul never compassed ideas and a style of which the cast was Greek. The form in which the fourth Gospel presents its ideas is Greek —a style flowing, ratiocinative, articulated." "It is," says Neander, "a work of one texture."† And any one can see in our translations a general resemblance between its style and that of the Epistles termed "Johannine," although it would appear that Baur and many others, among them Mr. M. Arnold, are able to detect such differences in the Greek, that they pronounce the Epistles and the Gospel works of different authorship. They are, however, varieties of the same species, whereas the Synoptics and the fourth Gospel differ generically.

It is true, the whole Church, till near this latter

* "God and the Bible," p. 255.
† "Life of Jesus Christ," p. 115.

half of the nineteenth century, has regarded the fourth Gospel as the direct testimony of the Apostle John, *i.e.* ever since the last quarter of the second century, and at that time there were many who bore distinct and emphatic "*testimony*" in its favour, as *e.g.*, Theophilus of Antioch; the unknown author of the Muratorian fragment, and especially Irenæus. It will be enough if we dwell for a moment on that of this last named.

According to Professor (now Bishop) Lightfoot, Irenæus bears the most important testimony to the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel, testimony which should be received by us, since Irenæus, he tells us, was an excellent witness to a question of fact. We have already seen, however, that there are some who do not attach so great weight to this testimony as does Dr. Lightfoot.

Irenæus was doubtless a sincere man, who made the assertion in good faith, and his having made it may therefore be accepted as valid evidence that he truly believed the son of Zebedee was the author of the latest of our Canonical Gospels; yet before *we* rest on his authority, it might be wise to ask a question or two respecting the grounds of his belief.

Was it merely because the book commended itself to his conscience as true, that he concluded it must have been written by an apostle, and that that apostle, from the internal evidence, must have been John? And because it was necessary that the evangelists should number precisely four, that a messenger might

be sent on each of the four winds to the four quarters of the earth? We know that Irenæus was sufficiently credulous and uncritical to argue thus.

We admit he would be a sufficient witness to such a fact as that he had heard Polycarp, or some other elder of the previous generation, declare John to have been the author, if when he heard it he was of full age. But he does not affirm that even in his boyhood he heard this stated.

Again, does Bishop Lightfoot always accept the testimony of Irenæus as to matters of fact? For "St. Irenæus assures us that all Christians possessed the power of working miracles; that they prophesied, cast out devils, healed the sick, and sometimes even raised the dead; that some who had been thus resuscitated lived for many years among them; and that it would be impossible to reckon the wonderful acts which were daily performed." So writes Mr. Lecky in vol. i. of his "History of European Morals."

Bishop Lightfoot may, if he can, believe all this on the authority of Irenæus, but we cannot follow him in his so doing, nor can we, (while so many weighty reasons present themselves against the Johannine authorship of any portion of the New Testament,) because of the assertion of that good man, accept the fourth Gospel as from the pen of the Apostle John, notwithstanding that Irenæus, when a boy, listened to the aged Polycarp, who had in his youth been a disciple of a certain "John, the disciple of the Lord."

For Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, near Ephesus in Phrygia, a contemporary of Polycarp, also knew of a "John, the disciple of the Lord," and knew, moreover, that he was not the apostle, but John the Presbyter, the apostle having been long dead.

We need not, then, like Irenæus, make the mistake of supposing Polycarp to have ever seen or heard the Apostle John; and even if he had, though it might prove the great age of that apostle, which now rests on no sure ground, it would yet go a very little way as evidence that he was the author of the Gospel attributed to him.

Keim discusses this question of the two Johns at great length, devoting to it six or seven pages,* and concludes by saying, "We have in the foregoing discussion dismissed one of the two Johns" (that is, from the theatre of Asia Minor, and the time of the youth of Papias and of Polycarp), "and it remains to be seen whether any one will venture to resuscitate him, and to make fresh misuse of the text of Papias." †

Assuming it, then, as sufficiently proved that the

* "Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. pp. 214–221.

† This notable text of Papias is thus given in "Supernatural Religion," vol. i. p. 445: "If it happened that any one came who followed the Presbyters, I inquired minutely after the words of the Presbyters, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip or what Thomas, or James, or what John, or Matthew, or what any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what Aristion and the Presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say, for I held that what was to be derived from books was not so profitable as that from the living and abiding voice." The two Johns here mentioned by Papias were confounded by Irenæus into one, but Eusebius knew that Papias spoke of two, and Keim gives many traces of two Johns as known to some of the ancients.

fourth Gospel was not written till after the first quarter of the second century, and therefore not by the Apostle John, we shall next try, if it be possible, to conceive the state of mind of the writer, as one who wrote in sincerity and truth.

There can be no doubt that the author was familiar with the prevalent philosophy of the East. He has indeed been termed the Apostle of Philosophy, and a philosophy that commends itself to the lovers of Plato.

We have seen that Professor Plumptre supposed him to have become acquainted through Apollos with some of the ideas of Philo the Alexandrian, and although we cannot be sure of the channel by which the Philonian notions reached our author, we may be allowed to assume that, in all probability, he was directly or indirectly to some extent influenced by them.*

Philo, as is well known, was a philosophic Jew of Alexandria, who flourished in the first century, and who, being imbued with Greek culture and the love of it, endeavoured to read the Hebrew Scriptures in a Platonic sense; and as the law, literally understood, but ill accorded with the sublime speculations of the

* Canon Kingsley was also emphatically of the same opinion. Thus:—"One can hardly doubt, I should fancy, that many parts of St. John's Gospels and Epistles, whatever view we may take of them, if they are to be called anything, are to be called metaphysic and philosophic. And one can no more doubt that before writing them he had studied Philo, and was expanding Philo's thought in the direction which seemed fit to him, than we can doubt it of the earlier Neoplatonists." ("Historical Lectures and Essays," p. 70.)

Greek philosopher, Philo looked beneath the literal sense for a deeply hidden spiritual meaning adapted for his purpose, and thus was led to allegorize the Old Testament so as entirely to transform its purport and signification.

Many writers of the present generation have brought Philo prominently before their readers, in order to account for the wide-spreading Christology, which at length found a new and lasting expression in the fourth Gospel. If we look at a few of the phrases thus brought to our notice, we shall at once see the possibility, nay, the probability of the connection between Philo and the evolution of dogmatic Christianity.

According to De Pressensé, Philo affirms that, as God cannot come into direct contact with matter, he uses as media the ideas or powers which emanate from himself, and which form in combination "the World of the Word." "Philo ascribes to this *Word* the most eminent attributes, calls him the *Son of God*."*

The author of "Supernatural Religion" gives us many striking quotations from Philo respecting "the Eternal Logos." "The Word is the likeness of God, by which the universe was created." "And they who inquire what nourishes the soul . . . learn at last that it is the Word of God, and the Divine Reason. . . . This is the heavenly nourishment to which the Holy Scripture refers . . . saying, 'Lo, I rain upon you bread from heaven.'" Philo represents the Word as

* "Jesus Christ," p. 90.

the fountain of wisdom, whereof they who drink obtain *eternal life.* The Logos is also "the Divine Word," the "first begotten Son" of God, his High Priest and Ambassador to man, and is a second God "that must be God of us imperfect beings."

Philo lived and wrote in the first half of the first century, and we have admitted the probability that Paul in his youth obtained through Gamaliel (or was it only in later life, through Apollos?) some acquaintance, if not with the writings of Philo, at least with the Alexandrian mode of treating the Scriptures. We see, anyhow, that the apostle of the Gentiles pressed allegorical interpretation of the sacred writings into his service, and made, in this way, the most unlikely passages serve his turn and support the conclusions which in the main were derived by reflection from his own subjective experiences.

Then, too, another great teacher of that century, familiar with both Philonian and Pauline ideas and methods (we are presuming that Apollos was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews), constructed an argument for the abolition of Judaism out of Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures themselves.* For the Epistle to the Hebrews does away with the continuance of the law and of sacrifices, by deeming all the ordinances mere types of something higher, which now takes their place. Paul had already spoken of "Christ" as a Passover or Paschal Lamb, a sacrifice

* Apollos is called in the Acts a Jew of Alexandria. Paul calls him a fellow-apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 6–9.

and propitiation for the sins of the world. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, taking this as his main idea, represents all the sacrifices of the Judaistic worship as mere types of this great sacrifice, having their consummation and end in him.*

The Epistle is evidently written, not to Jews in general, but to the Jew-Christians. Speaking of the new covenant, he argues † that "new" being antithetical to "old," the former covenant is evidently worn out, and we have done with it. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, and Jesus is of the new. He was offered in sacrifice, and is gone into the heavens to act as priest and intercessor. "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." ‡

For his greatness, see also the first chapter. By him God made all things, he therefore answers to the Logos of Philo. The author quotes the sixth and seventh verses of the forty-fifth Psalm, which he regards as saying of the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God (or O God) thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

The Apocalypse, as we have seen, describes the Christ as a superhuman being—as the Lamb, who

* See Heb. x. 8, 9. † Heb. viii. 13. ‡ Heb. iv. 15.

though slain, is yet King of kings, and Lord of lords, and as the Word of God.

And as Philo had said of "the Word," that he is the "first begotten Son of God," and "the likeness of God, by which the universe was created," so, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, verses 15, 16, the Son "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for in him were all things created."

Now, doubtless, there were many churches in Asia Minor and elsewhere whose members were taught to regard as genuine and apostolic the Epistles known as Paul's, or most of them, and of these members some would be most attracted by one portion of the Pauline doctrine, and some by another; and when the controversy respecting the Jewish law had died out, it would come to be believed by all as a matter of course, that Paul had always been in accord with the other apostles. Pfleiderer thinks the Acts was certainly written by a Pauline Christian who thus believed. Among these Churches there would be a minority of Hebrew parentage (Hellenist Jews), who were doctrinally assimilated to the Church in which they and their parents had been reared.

Let us, then, fix our attention on one of these Christians of Hebrew parentage (say of Asia Minor, for example), taught to regard as apostolic and worthy of great reverence (though not as Holy Scripture, for only the Old Testament was, in the early years of the second century, so regarded) the Epistles published

as Paul's, whether genuine or not; also the Epistle to the Hebrews, and likewise the Apocalypse.

He has not only been educated in Pauline Christianity, but without any knowledge of an antagonism between it and the Judaic Christianism of the older Apostles.

He has not "known (Jesus) after the flesh," but has always been trained to regard him as the Christ; as a spiritual Lord; as quite a superhuman being, higher than all angels; as having existed in heaven before his birth on earth; as having existed, indeed, before all other created things and beings; as having been present at the creation, God having, by him, made the worlds.

The mind of this our Pauline Christian of Hebrew extraction is of no common order. He is studious, thoughtful, and of a philosophic tendency; he *may* even have studied Plato; he is perhaps likely to have studied Philo, though, to have produced the fourth Gospel, it is surely sufficient that he should have well known the Old Testament and the already written Christian writings; he is almost certain to have read the book of Wisdom;—but, of course, his chief studies have been in the Canonical Scriptures, which were to Paul, as well as to the Jew-Christians, the great fount of divine wisdom.

Having been taught, then, that God created all things by Christ Jesus, does he regard the Scriptures as, by implication, denying this when he reads,*

* Ps. xxxiii. 6.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made"? Nay, but he regards it as a full confirmation, since he has learnt from John * that the Christ, the Son of God, is also his Word.

And when he reads in Prov. iii. 19 that "The Lord by *wisdom* hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens," he stumbleth not, for he has already learned from Paul that Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God.†

Hence, whatever wondrous things are spoken of "the Word of God," or of the Divine Wisdom, are regarded by our philosophizing Christian as predicated also of the Son. Thus, in Prov. viii. 22–30, where Wisdom personified says of herself, "The Lord possessed me *in the beginning* of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there . . . when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." All this, then, is true of the Incarnate Wisdom, the Word, the Logos.

So likewise that grand description in the book of Wisdom:‡ "For Wisdom . . . is the worker of all things . . . having all power. . . . she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty . . . for she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted

* Rev. xix. 13. † 1 Cor. i. 24. ‡ Wisd. vii. 22-27.

mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things; . . . she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets."

Hence it is this Wisdom, the Son of God, by whom men come to God, for not only by wisdom do "kings reign and princes decree justice," but as "there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," so the Son, therefore, is that light that lighteth every man coming into the world.*

Our inheritor of Paul's Christology, then, feeding on the ideas above expressed, and revolving them in his mind, finds that he firmly holds as truth revealed from God that the Christ is divine in essence, and not human merely, for before he appeared on earth, yea, even in the very beginning of things, before the earth was, he proceeded forth and came from God.

And whether or not our "Christian Philosopher" was acquainted with the works of Philo, and read there that the "Word" is "a second God," who "may be called God of us imperfect beings," he will probably, with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, acknowledge that the "God" who in the forty-fifth Psalm is spoken of as, for his love of righteousness, exalted above his fellows, is no other than the Christ, and that, therefore, the title "God" may, though of course in a subordinate sense, be applied to him.

* John i. 9.

For if even the Scripture, "which cannot be broken," calls them gods to whom the Word of God came, how much more worthy of the name is he whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world? *

And so, with or without the works of Philo, from the Hebrew Scriptures and the apostolic writings, our Pauline Christian, even by the close of the first quarter of the second century of our era, might well have attained to a Christology which he could tersely express thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth."

For some others, who held a similar opinion of the identity of the Christ with the Logos, held also that the manifestation in the flesh was not real, that the Christ became incarnate only in appearance, consequently that the death of Jesus on the cross was only a semblance; and we may presume they deemed themselves followers of Paul notwithstanding, as they could still reckon themselves crucified with Christ, buried with him (in baptism) and risen again in spirit to newness of life; and the identification of the believer with Christ might seem to these persons (the Docetists)

* See John x. 34–36, quoting Ps. lxxxii. 6, "I have said, Ye are gods," etc.

not less but more complete, if the sufferings of Christ were only semblable.

But the author of the fourth Gospel has not so learned Christ. He believes in a High Priest that was "made perfect through suffering," and who was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," and believing in the nearness of the "only-begotten Son" to the Father, he has learned from Paul to see in the sacrifice of that Son—in the giving him to die for the world while it was yet sinful—a wondrous manifestation of the love of God.* If the suffering was not real the sacrifice was not great, either on the part of the Father or of the Son.

So, then, the Docetic heresy is a departure from the Pauline doctrine, while the "Johannine" teaching is but another phase of Paulinism.

In one respect it is a development of Paulinism, especially in the denunciation of unbelievers. Paul, while preaching salvation by faith, being yet obliged to confront the fact that Israel, as a whole, is in unbelief, cannot admit that they are lost, but only that their salvation is deferred.†

But one who has been educated in the belief of the necessity of faith in Christ in order to salvation, and who has been taught that this faith is a necessary preliminary to righteousness, is apt to take the further step of imputing special unrighteousness to those who do not believe. Hence it is easy for such a one to slide into denouncing unbelief and unbelievers.

* Rom. v. 8; viii. 32. † Rom. xi. 1, 11, 25, 26, etc.

That the ideas put forth in the fourth Gospel should have been held, and that they should have dominated many minds in certain sections (say) of Eastern Christianity, is no marvel; but how, it may be asked, can we account for their having been thrown into the form of a biography of Jesus, and thus made to utter themselves through him—that is to say, How could a Christian, in the first half of the second century, write a fallacious history, a pretended history of the sayings and doings of Jesus, in order to persuade the Church that her doctrines respecting his person and work were, at the first, distinctly taught by himself?

As we do not believe the author of the fourth Gospel was guilty of conscious deception, the question resolves itself into the following:—How could the author have believed that Jesus uttered the speeches which he puts into his mouth, when he must have known that they were purely his own compositions? *How* could he? that, then, is the question.

It must be remembered that the ideas were not the author's own, in the sense of his having originated them. He was reared in an atmosphere of Paulinism, and what he afterwards obtained from other sources was found so congenial as freely to be assimilated by him. Each new view confirmed every other, so that he felt himself in possession of a compact and homogeneous mass of revealed truth. He did not imagine that these doctrines of the Incarnate Logos, etc., were discoveries of his own, but that they were truths of divine revelation, the heritage of the Church—truths

which must have been distinctly uttered by the Incarnate Wisdom himself, when, having been made flesh, he dwelt among us. The truths of the great salvation *must* have had their beginning in having been "spoken by the Lord," and so were confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*

It is true, he finds many Christians who are, like the epistolary James, silent respecting the ascriptions which are so prominent in his own mind. Doubtless it often seemed strange to him that so many should persistently ignore them. But he hears of certain books which profess to record the life and teachings of the Master himself, written, perhaps, twenty or even forty years before he wrote, and possibly some twenty years before he saw them; these he obtains and reads, and it is easy to imagine how astonished and disappointed he must have felt at the perusal of the Synoptic and other Gospels, as one by one he gets them for the purpose.

He does not anywhere find what to him is alone the Gospel—that all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, may be justified by faith in the Messiahship and resurrection of Jesus, because of his atonement; nothing of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world; nothing of the Christ having been the only begotten Son of God before the worlds were framed.

But what does he find? Simply a prophet, who is to become the Christ at his reappearance. Merely a

* Heb. ii. 3.

man (for the doctrine of the Incarnation does not appear in the teachings of Jesus), a righteous man, and one who works miracles as great as were wrought by Moses or Elijah; but yet simply a man, on whom at his baptism a great measure of the spirit descended. A baptism, too, of repentance *for the remission of sins!* One who does not even declare himself the Christ till at the very close of his earthly career, and then not by way of teaching, it being forced from him, as it were, by judicial process.

Then John the "Baptist," too, inspired prophet as he was, must have understood the greatness of the Christ—his true office as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world—and must equally have known him to be no other than Jesus, yet he is represented as ignorant of the fact; he does not know whether Jesus is the Christ or not.

And the Christ, our Paschal Lamb, is represented as having himself eaten the Passover, and as not having been slain till the day after. Surely, this cannot be; God must have caused that the true Passover should have been slain on the appointed day.*

* We believe most critics are persuaded that the fourth evangelist had before him the other three; Professor Plumptre, however, thought the objections to this theory "altogether insuperable." "It is surely enough," he wrote (1866), "to refer to the perplexing differences between his narrative and that of the other three Gospels as to the day and hour of crucifixion. It is altogether incredible that he should, either unconsciously or deliberately, have left these difficulties unexplained, if he had the other records before him" ("Christ and Christendom," p. 73). But it is possible to believe (and, perhaps, to some impossible not to believe) that the great number and glaring nature of the differences

So when the Pauline Christian of whom we have been writing ponders these and other variations from what he feels sure must have been the facts, to what conclusion does he come? We may conceive him asking about the Gospels, and demanding who wrote these histories, these professed narrations respecting Christ and his gospel. They are anonymous. And he is convinced that though they may contain much that is true, yet, in regard to many chief matters, whoever wrote them, they cannot be true. Evidently (to him) the men who handed these down as the sum and substance of the life and teachings of Jesus were men, as they are described in the books themselves, "without understanding." They have ignored the main features of the gospel, and have dwelt on many trivial matters. The books, as transcripts of the life of Christ, are altogether unworthy of him. Did the writers know their own ignorance? Presumably not, or they would have prayed for the Spirit to bring to their remembrance the most weighty things that Jesus had said to them;* or if, as was most likely, the writers were not the original apostles, still they could have prayed for the Spirit to teach them what Jesus had said and done. They were blind and knew it not, or surely they would have sought and obtained

together form a total which could not have existed by mere accident, which could only have been the result of a deliberate rejection of the Synoptic narrative in every such case of difference; and that it was, in fact, a strong conviction of the untruth of his predecessors' statements that caused the fourth evangelist to issue counter statements.

* See John xiv. 26.

an unction from the Holy One, giving the knowledge of all things.*

It is necessary, then, that there should be a true record (especially that the existing ones so radically unsound may be supplanted) of the most important teachings of Jesus Christ; and all the more that there is now no strong hope of his immediate appearance, of that advent which is being indefinitely postponed, which, indeed, could never have been promised in the words given in these Gospels.

Seeing, then (let us suppose him to continue), that we have no faithful narrative of the Gospel, and that, though there is such need, it cannot be obtained of man, all the apostles having been long dead, why should not I write as well as another, yea, why not rather, since the Spirit has caused me to discern the need thereof?

I have faith that God will reveal even this unto me, and give me that anointing of the Spirit which teacheth all things, "all mysteries, and all knowledge." Can it be denied to the prayer of faith? Impossible, seeing also that it is most surely in accordance with the will of God.

Such a man as this would therefore pray that the divine unction should rest upon him, and teach him the very words that Jesus had uttered, those words of chief importance, pregnant with spirit and life. Praying thus in faith, in like faith he commences his work, deliberately striking the Logos note to bring

* See 1 John ii. 20, 27.

himself into harmony with what shall be revealed to him (*i.e.* in him); and, being impressed with the conviction—since the Logos is the Christ, who is the Incarnate Word—that there must, in the first place, have been full and explicit testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus, and to the fact that he, the Word made flesh, was the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, we find, accordingly, that the Baptist is most emphatic in his testimony,* having been first himself convinced by a sign from heaven.†

It must, he concludes, be untrue that Simon Peter was first to profess faith in the Messiahship, and that not till near the end of Jesus' life; nor could the Saviour have uttered the words put into his mouth, to the effect that no human being had informed Simon of it. So the author of the fourth Gospel represents the Christhood of Jesus as having been known to Simon from the first, since it was expressly told him by his brother Andrew, who had it from the Baptist; for, to the fourth evangelist, discipleship to Jesus implied a profession of belief in him as the Christ.‡

Jesus had definitely instructed his disciples not to go (with the good tidings of the approaching kingdom) into any city of the Samaritans, but to confine themselves to the house of Israel. But it appears to our author impossible that such commands could have been given; accordingly he suppresses and, after his manner, obliquely nullifies them, for *his* Jesus himself

* John i. 29–31. † John i. 33, 34. ‡ John i. 35–51.

goes into Samaria, and reveals to a woman of that district that he is the Christ, and he obtained many disciples among the Samaritans.*

The main purpose of this Gospel is acknowledged at its close,† for since the existing narratives are not fitted to confirm any believer, being rather likely to raise doubts as to the Messiahship than to allay them, it is necessary that a true account be given of the prominent points of Jesus' teaching, and especially that respecting his own rank in the spiritual world, and the universality of his redeeming grace.

As the John of the Apocalypse places himself in spirit—in imagination—forward into the day of the Lord, so does the fourth evangelist transport himself backward into the day of the Lord already past, making as vivid a picture to himself as he is able, fondly believing that he is so guided by the Holy Spirit as to reproduce actual occurrences, and the very words uttered by the Christ on many important occasions. He thus from time to time continues his work as thoughts occur to him, inserting from the prior Gospels such narratives as commend themselves, inserting also what he deems necessary to counteract the errors of those Gospels, and probably he interweaves some traditions of Jesus as they rose to his mind, such as, by the laws of association of ideas, happened to fit in with his train of thought. That Jesus should not personally have given the Holy Ghost to his disciples before his ascension, is another

* John iv. 25, 26; 39-42. † John xx. 30, 31.

point that needs correction; instead, therefore, of waiting till after his "ascension," to give it from heaven,* the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, the first time he sees them after his resurrection, breathes on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." † And the Spirit is not confined to the apostles, for all the glory which he gives them is also to be given to "all who should hereafter believe on him through their word." ‡

And the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, will testify of Jesus, and will be for a guide to all truth.§

And thus it is we propound this theory as the most credible (indeed quite tenable) as to the origin of the fourth Gospel, a work which has caused, and will yet cause, so much controversy.

We must not conceive the author as at any time entering on or proceeding with his work without first, in the name of Jesus Christ, praying the Father for the Spirit to guide him into all the truth concerning the Son and his teaching; for he agrees with the Synoptics in this, that God will give his Spirit to them that ask him.‖

Perhaps it is worth while to summarize the leading features of what we contend for in this chapter :—

1. The dominant ideas of the fourth Gospel are traceable to Pauline and Alexandrian sources.

* See Luke xxiv. 49–52 ; and Acts ii. 1–4, also ver. 33.

† John xx. 22. ‡ John xvii. 20–22.

§ John xv. 26; xvi. 13, 14.

‖ See John xvi. 23: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." And see xiv. 13, 14 ; also xv. 16 ; and especially "That the Father may be glorified in the Son."

2. The author of that Gospel was educated in those ideas.

3. They are to him the chief constituents of the Gospel of Christ.

4. As such, they *must have been* first spoken by the Lord (*i.e.* he so believes, without doubt).

5. That the existing records of Christ's life and teaching ignore them, and even are to some extent at variance therewith.

6. Hence there is a crying need for the very words of the Master, relative to himself; for his words are spirit and life, and are the Word of God, which is truth, by which believers are sanctified;* by which also many who now are not believers may come to salvation through confessing that Jesus is the Christ.

7. As the Spirit searcheth all things, and reveals all needful truth,† and as the Father will give the Spirit to each one who asks for it in his Son's name, he will, if I thus ask (thinks our author), bestow the Comforter on me, as a Guide to the truth which uttered itself by the *Word;* he will testify of the Christ, will take of his things and give them to me, that I may write them for the perfecting of the saints, and that the Son may be glorified, and the Father glorified in the Son. It must be so. It is according to the will of God.

8. Therefore, nothing doubting, but trusting in the promised guidance, he muses on the ideas (to him, the truths) in question, and bethinks himself as to

* See John xvii. 14–17. † 1 Cor. ii. 10–16.

whom and under what circumstances they were first announced by the Lord, or even previously by his forerunner.

9. Thus, fully expecting and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he believes he has it, and regards the thoughts that arise (the action of his imagination and reason working on a substratum supplied by former documents and by memory) as the revelations of the mind of Christ made by the Holy Spirit.

But there remains to him one difficulty yet.

How are people to believe in this Gospel? If they knew who had written it, many would refuse to believe that it was dictated by the Spirit (for the leaven of Antichrist is abroad), whereas if they believed it the work of an apostle, they would accept it as the truth. He will therefore withhold his name, and will utter a dark saying respecting the authorship, which may lead many to regard the book as written by an apostle, though he will not name him.*

Baur thinks it certain that the author intended it to be received as written by the Apostle John,† and we know, at any rate, that, slowly as at first it seems to have won its widening way, after about 170–175 A.D., and therefore probably for some time previous to that date, down to the middle of the present century, it

* See John xix. 34, 35. This incident was, perhaps, afloat as a tradition, and attributed to one of the disciples as a witness, who, being dead, yet speaketh, now that the incident is recorded in writing. As for John xxi. 24, it appears not to have been written by the author.

† "Church History," vol. i. pp. 154, 155.

was so received by the Church, and that without question.

But now, since Baur, it is becoming daily more difficult to believe in the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel. Mr. M. Arnold, in "God and the Bible," p. 165, speaks of "the strong and growing acceptance" of Baur's criticism thereof.

Keim, though, as we have seen, he rejects Baur's indications of its date, yet quite as decidedly differs from the conservative critics; he affirms most unhesitatingly the unhistorical character of the latest Gospel, and thinks that Baur only failed because he did not prove so conclusively as he might have done that it has such a character. This is becoming constantly more clearly seen, and indeed acknowledged; for, says Keim,* "The historical weakness of the fourth Gospel is every day more decidedly and also more universally admitted"—to which we heartily say, For Jesus' sake. Amen.

* "Jesus of Nazara," vol. i. p. 179.

APPENDIX.*

SHOWING THE RELATION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH TO CHRISTIANITY.

THE "Christ from heaven" having been found to be a creation of faith, the way is cleared for a consideration of the life of Jesus of *Nazareth*, and it may be made apparent that this life, which demands to be conceived of as purely naturalistic, is more intelligible and consistent than that of the Jesus of Bethlehem-*cum*-Nazareth, presented to us in either of the Synoptic Gospels.

Starting now from Nazareth, and taking a glance at the locality in which Jesus was unquestionably reared, it might be well, if space permitted, to look at the religious ideas common to the Palestinian Jews of the time of Jesus' boyhood,—ideas inseparably interwoven with the national history and geography, simply conceiving of the young Nazarene, who probably had none of the special training of the sects, as an intelligent lad, with an unbounded appetite for knowledge, and as being also, at first, a ready recipient of the prevalent beliefs.

We know nothing of the youth of Jesus, and shall therefore be unable to trace, step by step, his progress from the orthodox Judaism of his boyhood to the heterodox con-

* Being an abstract or synopsis of the remaining vols. See Preface.

clusions of his later years; but still, to render our conception of him more real, it would be interesting to pass in review some of the more striking narrative and other passages of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to compare them with the mature convictions of the Great Teacher who speaks to us from the pages of the Synoptic Gospels. We may thus be able the better to know Jesus as he was in his prime, he having examined his traditional beliefs (excepting, perhaps, the grand substratum on which they were all placed), and having assimilated these and rejected those, till he stood forth with certain strong and definite convictions respecting righteousness, God, and the purposes of God towards the people of his peculiar care.

That God was perfect in righteousness was to Jesus an unquestionable certainty, and to such a mind as his all accounts of Jahveh incompatible with this were misrepresentations of him, though they occurred, as indeed many such did, in the Scriptures themselves.

On the other hand, miracles, as such, owing to his Hebrew training and the absence of Greek culture, would have presented no difficulties to him; his faith would accordingly have remained unshaken in the biblical narratives of God's dealings with Israel, except where these exhibited moral defects. His attitude towards the Scriptures would thus be found to have become what is now, in some quarters, termed semi-rationalist, what indeed was condemned by Mr.M ansel as that of rationalism, pure and simple. To Jesus the human element mingled with the divine in the writings of the prophets and psalmists, and even (and herein he differed from all his contemporaries) in the sacred law itself.

Let some of those portions of the Old Testament which are carefully let alone by prudent divines be quoted, and it will not be difficult to imagine Jesus' attitude in presence

of them, he being, perhaps, unsurpassed in clearness of moral vision.

On the other hand, let some of the portions of the ancient Scriptures, of those which embody their highest excellences, be placed before the reader, and it will be seen that *they* were the source of Jesus' best teaching. It will also be seen how Jesus would have been able to "rejoice in Jahveh, and to give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," and hence his hope in God, his love of him, and sympathy with what he regarded as the intentions of the heavenly Father.

Next, let it be briefly shown how this Jesus differed from the great men of the sects, from the typical Pharisee, and Essene, and from the worldly minded Sadducee.

The thoughts present to Jesus, now and again, in solitude, in calm moments, prior to the advent of the Baptist, may be inferred from our knowledge of what he believed to be the character of true righteousness; from his faith in an Infinite Being, purely of such a character; from his hope of a glorious future for Israel, the object of highest desire, as shown by the main subject of his usual prayers; for as he taught his disciples to pray, so, and precisely after that manner, must we suppose himself to have long held communion with the divine ideal of his faith and affections.

But, in full sympathy with Jesus, worthily to depict him thus longing for the reign of justice and of love, alas! who is sufficient for these things?

Having gained, however, the best conception possible to us of the "religious consciousness" of Jesus, knowing him, too, as a grand ethical genius, the first direct step in ascertaining his relation to Christianity (for hitherto he has been viewed only in relation to Hebrew religion) should be to consult the prophets of Israel respecting the Messiah they predicted, and if we can find any clear utterances of a

Messianic nature, apparently possible of fulfilment at the time of Jesus, and worthy of being fulfilled, we may presume that these would have commanded the faith of Jesus, and that they would have given definite form to his expectations.

Just before the advent of the Baptist, when rumours of the coming Messiah began to be afloat, it may be presumed that the Nazarene consulted the prophets afresh concerning the Messianic predictions, discarding the trivial, as was his wont, and dwelling on the weightier matters presented in their writings.

For the purposes already mentioned, it might be as well to quote from the prophets, properly so called, the most distinct and emphatic of their Messianic vaticinations, and when this is done, the reader and presumed inquirer will see what it was that Jesus would have been justified in expecting; say, for instance—

An anointed king, to be primarily, of course, king of Israel.

The destruction of the persistently wicked, those who refuse to obey the promised Elijah, who shall be sent to turn the people's hearts before the coming of the Anointed One.

That the king and people shall become, by the help of the Spirit of God, perfectly wise and righteous, and be gifted, to some extent, with miraculous power over nature.

That Israel shall be freed from foreign domination, and that the dispersed should be restored to their own land.

Afterwards, that the outlying nations would be dealt with; but this class of events is probably too remote, and the difficulties in the way of interpreting prophecy too great for any definite opinion.

Advantage should be taken of an excellent opportunity for pointing out the astonishing weakness of Bishop Butler's reasoning from prophecy in reference to the Messiah.

Coming, then, to John the Baptist, who has seldom been assigned a sufficiently important position as a factor in the great religious revival which culminated in Christianity, attention should be drawn to him and his work.

It should be shown, by a comparison of the Synoptic Gospels with the account given by Josephus, that the Baptist was unquestionably an historical character, and that the account of his preaching in the first two Gospels may in the main be relied on.

Also, how John so influenced the people as to change the character of their expectations, causing them to regard as the coming Messiah's *main object* an internal rather than an external salvation.

Let the chief points of the Baptist's preaching be also indicated. He is a prophet of woe, announcing *fire* as the instrument of God's vengeance on the wicked.

It would not be difficult to show how a stern ascetic brooding on certain portions of the prophetic writings, some of the most striking of which, predicting "the great and terrible day of Jahveh," might be quoted, would naturally preach as John is said to have done. The sources of his inspiration would thus be seen to have been Malachi, Joel, the example of Elijah, etc.

He expects the almost immediate presence of the Messiah in judgment, and is intensely in earnest in calling on the people to prepare for the great day of the Lord, urging them to "flee from the coming wrath" by sincere repentance, and by submitting to be immersed in the Jordan's waters, in token that they desire to be washed from all their sins by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

His influence on the people can scarcely be over-estimated (see the Synoptics and Josephus); they are moved as the heart of one man, and throng the Jordan's banks. Thus commences the unprecedentedly enormous wave of

religious emotion, of character somewhat akin to modern "revivals," which is to issue in Christianity.

To return to the Nazarene. He hears of John, goes to the Jordan's banks, believes the announcement that the divine kingdom is at hand, and obeys the call to the baptism of *repentance.*

When Jesus heard of the terrible punishment threatened by the messenger of God on the unrepentant, he might have shuddered at their fate; but on seeing the crowds animated, as it appeared, with one desire to turn and serve God with the heart, he entered into the divine joy over the repenting sinners, and doubtless felt that now the curse would be averted, and blessing would have its perfect work, according to the Father's desire. His own most solemn act of re-dedication to the service of God having been followed by the assurance that all past wrongdoing of his own was now freely forgiven, according to the messages of the Father by the psalmists and prophets, Jesus became full of high-wrought expectation of what God was about to do for his people, now that all barriers were fast being removed, and the desire to bless could have free and unlimited course. Is it possible, then, to estimate too highly the baptism of holy emotions of hope, love, and joy in which the heart of Jesus was at this crisis immersed?

He felt that he was a son of God, loving and beloved; that he had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and was on the verge of, even if not yet admitted into, the heavenly kingdom.

At length becoming aware of the needs of the body, having wandered into the wilderness, he wishes to test the powers of the subjects of "the kingdom" over nature, but is withheld by a sense of the impropriety of such an attempt. Thus he resisted what he afterwards regarded as his first temptation after his baptism.

Jesus had thought of the coming kingdom as something to be earnestly desired and prayed for; but though John represented it as a time of fiery wrath of the Almighty, the Nazarene, seeing the effects of the Baptist's preaching on the people, is greatly rejoiced thereat, and thus still views John's announcement as "good tidings."

When, after some time has elapsed and his feelings have subsided, he sees the enthusiasm of the people, and hears rumours of the interference of the authorities (having probably conferred with John as to who will be anointed, and having learned that it may possibly be Jesus' self), imagination involuntarily takes a rapid flight. What if John should proclaim him to the people as Messiah! He beholds himself quickly at the head of an enthusiastic and victorious host, freeing Israel from the grasp of the Roman, and going on conquering and to conquer till the whole world lies at his feet. Shall he, then, take any step to induce John to make such an announcement? Nay, verily; he that seeketh his own glory shall be thrown down, God alone must be exalted in that day. Thus Jesus becomes conscious of having resisted a second assault of the enemy of souls.

But when the Baptist has been arrested—strange that the Messiah has not appeared to deliver him, may he not be neglecting the work God intends him to do? What if this should be Jesus himself? Should he not, at least, try whether the power of God is with him? Yet no, the command is express—"Thou shall not try Jahveh thy God as they did at Massah, saying, 'Is the power of God among us or not?'" And so a third time Jesus is victor.

Having this consciousness of the evil of self-seeking, and especially of trying to force God's hand in the matter of the Messiahship (is it not clear that the whole force of the trial lay in his ignorance of who would be anointed?); it follows that, having remained true to his conceptions of duty, Jesus

will now resolve to leave the whole matter in the hands of the Highest, to reveal to Israel as Messiah whomsoever he will and whensoever. As there is delay, it must be for a wise purpose, and is not that purpose apparent, namely, that the people of the north of the land of Israel should have an opportunity of repentance and preparation for the kingdom as those of the south have had by the Baptist?

From Joel's description of "the great day of Jahveh," when all shall prophesy, Jesus believes himself called to exercise the functions of a prophet, and to summon Galilee to repentance, as John did Judæa, announcing also the "good tidings" that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," to complete the preparation for the Messiah's coming. But instead of drawing great crowds to one spot, as must be done by the continuance of baptism, and so exciting the suspicions of Herod, he deems it best to begin quietly in the synagogue at Capernaum, where he resides, for surely others will be moved of the Spirit to preach in other places, so that soon the whole land will have heard the proclamation, and all things will be ready for the appearing of God's chief minister, the representative of Himself.

Instead, then, of representing Jesus as offering himself to the people as a Spiritual Messiah, and demanding belief in himself as such, or as having contemplated the introduction of a new religion, which should subvert Judaism and extend over the whole world (since for neither of these theories is there the least shadow of evidence), let him be conceived of as acting in the manner that would be most natural to such a character under the above circumstances, without any consciousness of supernatural power, except such as he deemed to appertain to the prophetic office; and he must be regarded as teaching, in the main, much as he is represented to have taught in the first Gospel.

Let such a conception of Jesus, then, be presented to

the world, and it may be seen how little mysterious was his career.

Indeed, its outlines may be, now and here, indicated by giving in brief—(what should be written more at large)—some account of the Jesus of Matthew and Mark, divested of the supernatural halo which has been since thrown around him, leaving, however, as much as appears to have been believed in by Jesus and his contemporaries, through unscientific inferences from phenomena, natural and explainable, though perhaps then unprecedented.

The preaching of the prophet of Nazareth was eminently adapted to the wants of the time. As the Baptist did, so Jesus called men to repentance, for that the heaven-like kingdom was at hand. Crowds were apparently repentant, and to them he addressed words of comfort and encouragement. Although judgment had been delayed—had not come so swiftly as John had led the people to expect—yet Jesus could still utter the same formula, for was not each of their souls a microcosm where the will of God should have entire sway? And where God thus reigns, is not that his kingdom? Thus Jesus exhorted the people to seek, above all things, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. He taught them in what true righteousness consisted—the love of God and of man—epitomizing the law and the prophets in his golden rule. His preaching was marked by the absence of reference to the Messiah, in accordance with his former resolve to lay aside all thought on this subject, so that God might reveal his Anointed at his pleasure.

If they believed the good tidings that this internal kingdom was immediately at hand, and if they, therefore, repenting of past sin, would seek it, let them tell their heavenly Father of their desire; let them pray that his kingdom may come, that his will be done on earth as in

heaven. Along with such prayer goes reformation, ceasing from evil, learning to do well, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Let them forgive those who have offended them, and then pray in confidence for their Father's full forgiveness; also, that they may be kept by the power of God from all assaults of the evil one, Satan, who is constantly trying to extend his kingdom in their souls. If they pray for the Holy Spirit, how is it possible for the Father to withhold it? They give their children food when hunger's cry demands it, how much more will their heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The time, then, is at hand, and God has begun to baptize with the Holy Ghost. Jesus can draw on his own recent experience, and describe in heartfelt tones of sincere reality the blessedness of the man "to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." God will pour out his Spirit upon all; "their sons and their daughters shall prophesy;" all may know the Father, and be baptized with the Holy Spirit, if only from the heart they wish it.

If these things were believed by persons mourning for their sins and in fear of "the coming wrath," what a revolution of feeling must have ensued,—and how greatly their effect was enhanced by the personality of the prophet of Nazareth we can but conjecture! But many who were in terror of the judgment heard the word, and anon with joy received it. Some of the phenomena of conversion were now first experienced. These are very varied, but many modern instances should be given, with narrations of some of the peculiar physical effects known to have resulted from precisely similar revulsions of feeling, from terror to love and joy. We know the genus, if not the species.

At that day, with the prevalent notions of demoniacal possession and exorcism, these hitherto unknown physical

convulsions (which prostrated many of the subjects of conversion), and their issue in ecstatic outbursts of praise and in manifestly changed character, must have been deemed owing to the expulsion of the demons, the convulsions being caused by them in their rage at the prospect of being driven forth. Doubtless some, during the paroxysms, imagined themselves possessed, and personated the demon, as in modern instances of a similar nature.

But, not to enlarge, these extraordinary, nay, unprecedented phenomena are to the people (and also to Jesus) clear signs of divine power—proofs to them that a prophet, mighty in word and deed, has arisen in their midst. He surely, then, as God is working with him, will be able to heal all their diseases.

Thus we see the genesis of faith in Jesus as a miracle-worker; it can hardly have been otherwise.

Here is the place to give a few instances and testimonies respecting the power of faith and feeling, tending to show the great probability that at Capernaum and elsewhere in Galilee many cases of healing, temporary and permanent, actually occurred.

Jesus, reviewing the effect of his preaching, as he must naturally be expected to do after the "miraculous manifestations," is confirmed in his belief that the kingdom is being established, that a people is rapidly being prepared for the king. He notes, too, that some of the signs thereof evidently correspond to those indicated by Isaiah, and though he has had no direct revelation to the effect, yet he can hardly avoid expecting that himself is destined for the Messianic dignity; but sees, too, that, be it as it may, he has as yet no warrant for departing from his present course of preparation, which fully occupies all his powers.

Our great Teacher, whose preaching has been hitherto

confined to Capernaum, and to the intervals of labour, including the larger one of the Sabbath, now resolves to give himself wholly to the work of evangelization; and in view of this great work of preaching the gospel in all the towns and villages of northern Palestine,* determines to summon other prophets to do likewise, since he expects all who have received the Spirit to communicate it, to prophesy, and cast out devils.

Experience soon shows the partial and sometimes temporary nature of the "Spirit's operations," and the need of training his helpers in the evangelic field of labour.

As the numbers that flock to hear him are too great for the synagogue, open-air preaching becomes a necessity. Strangers returning to their own towns are desired to keep silence as to the miraculous cures, etc., since Jesus finds they sometimes involve difficulties, and tend to distract people's attention from the main object—the salvation of their own souls from sin.

Knowing that Nazareth had heard of the work done in Capernaum, our prophet visits the place of his birth and upbringing. His friends and townsmen, perhaps from previous knowledge of his heretical views, are sceptical as to his powers, and demand immediate evidence by his working a miracle to order. He declines compliance, whereupon "the baser sort" would wreak on him summary vengeance, but are restrained from action by the better disposed, who have been impressed by the calm nobility of Jesus' bearing.

Having chosen four fishermen in Capernaum, and having induced them to give themselves to the work, first of preparation for a ministry similar to his own, and then to that of the exercise of their new vocation, they are enrolled as his special disciples, and therefore regard Jesus as a great Rabbi and Prophet combined.

* *i.e.* in Galilee, and on the other side of the lake.

His time thus becomes entirely occupied in public and private preaching and teaching, with, perhaps, but few intervals of solitude. His bodily wants are provided for by those who revere his teaching; and he, setting aside all thoughts of grandeur, suppressing all desire of kingly dignity and power, deems his true vocation, at least for the present, to be that of saving sinners, by turning them to the pursuit of righteousness. He sees, indeed, that the Messiah, come when he may, can do no work of a higher nature than that of seeking and saving the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

It must be apparent that the idea of establishing a new world-religion has never entered the mind of Jesus; that his present function is, he believes, to prepare Israel for her promised king; and his unacknowledged expectation is that himself *may* be destined, when the preparation is complete, to be that king—a thought, however, which he sedulously seeks to banish. Let it be well understood—for a careful study of Jesus' teachings as given in the first two Gospels, allowing a little for the tendency to insert here and there a phrase tending to Jesus' exaltation, will confirm the finding—that the prophet of Nazareth appears never to have announced himself as the actual Messiah, but only attained, at length, to the conviction (and even here he possibly again, now and then, doubted) that he was destined, elected by God, to fill that august office when the preparation should be completed; and very soon after coming to this conclusion, he came to believe that he must first suffer death at Jerusalem.

But at present he has no thought of such a catastrophe. The land is white for harvest. The people being ripe for the reception of the gospel message, Jesus desires to prepare twelve men for its delivery. He has to reject some as unfit, and, indeed, finds a great scarcity of men both able and willing to abandon their old callings for this new vocation.

So he prays that God will provide labourers, and instructs his disciples to do the like. He at length obtains twelve the best he can get, who become the apostles—the sent—of the Master; for Jesus finds the effect of their preaching much more apparent when they preach in his name, and come to the people with a message direct from himself, the renowned prophet, Jesus of Nazareth. But they are not yet sent away, the centre of operations being, for a long time, Capernaum.

He has never attempted to conciliate the Pharisees, who, because of his evident alienation from, and disregard of, them and their wise men and scribes, have been from the first suspicious of him, and have sent emissaries to watch his proceedings. They think they discern his real character by the company he most frequents—he is a friend of sinners.

His fame, however, has now spread throughout the land, and has reached John in his far-off prison.

The Baptist, who must long have been expecting the Messiah to appear as his deliverer, sends to ask Jesus if *he* has been anointed for the throne? "Art thou he that should come, or must we still look for another?" But Jesus, true to the line of conduct he deems obligatory on him, asks John's messengers to make use of their eyes and ears for their teacher, that he may judge for himself from "the signs of the times."

After their departure, Jesus speaks of John as not inferior to the greatest of the prophets of old, but yet inferior to "the least in the kingdom of heaven." John is, however, the Elijah predicted in Malachi; he is therefore the forerunner of the Messiah.

John, then, has asked his successor whether or not he is the Messiah. Thus the question is now brought directly to Jesus for his consideration; for, after the messengers of

the Baptist have returned to him, the question must surely recur to Jesus as one needing some sort of settlement. If not the Messiah, what is Jesus' relation to the Messianic kingdom? True, it is not for himself to say; but now the question has been once mooted, others may propose it afresh, and it has a disquieting tendency. Jesus has always found peace in banishing it. So since no revelation of his Messiahship has been made to him, since every day's experience convinces him that as regards miraculous power over nature (the cures wrought resulting directly from the faith of the subjects of them) he is yet weak, and as other men, Jesus now resolves to erect a barrier against high and presumptuous thoughts by constantly reminding himself of his weaknesses, of his continuing to participate in the defects and infirmities of ordinary human nature.

In the ancient Scriptures he has often met with the epithet "son of man," denoting the typical human being, the representative of humanity, and has himself used it in a similar sense, therefore meaning man in general. He recollects such Scriptures as—"What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom is no help;" and "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." So Jesus determines not only to think of himself as merely a son of man, an ordinary child of humanity, but he will also, to discourage those who would approach him with flattering titles, speak of himself as such, answering any such question as that of the Baptist by the reply that he is but a son of man; thus, in course of time, whenever it seems fitting to use the third person—and he will do it when he can—he will call himself "the Son of man," *i.e.* the person who can only describe himself as a son of man. There is in this no disclaimer of the future Messiahship; the question is left open as before, and is thus forcibly, as it were, kept

open in opposition to any temptation to close it by assuming the honours of Messiahship.

There is not only no ground for the supposition that he ever styled himself the Son of God, but it does not appear that such a phrase was yet in use, even to denote the Messiah.*

Jesus' watchful opponents, the emissaries of the Jerusalem Pharisees, have found that he does not hesitate, in some circumstances, to break the sabbath, and that he defends the deed. The knowledge of this they will treasure as a weapon against him, to be used when opportunity offers.

The Nazarene prophet, who has of late been engaged away from Capernaum, only presumably returning thither to rest, at length becomes aware of the great backsliding that is there taking place, partly through the natural reaction from a period of great religious excitement, and partly from the fact that the judgment announced by John —the destruction of the wicked—has not taken place, some months now having elapsed. Jesus attempts, therefore, to arrest the downward movement, and affirms that neither profession of discipleship to himself, nor any past success in prophesying, casting out devils, etc., will weigh in their favour without personal righteousness.

Another discouragement arises from the sad tidings of the death of the Baptist. This event also would naturally alarm Jesus' mother and brothers with fears for his safety; they therefore seek him, probably with the hope of persuading him to abandon his self-chosen task, to pursue no longer a course fraught with danger. Conferring on the subject with some of his Pharisaic adversaries, his friends conclude his reason affected. Jesus, however, cannot give up his mission. Having to abandon either his natural or spiritual relatives, he chooses to adhere to the latter. "My

* We regard much in the "Book of Enoch" as of Christian origin. See "The Jewish Messiah," by Prof. Drummond.

mother and brothers are they who hear the Word of God and keep it."

His opponents everywhere endeavour, and with some success, to undermine his influence, and to destroy his reputation.

Jesus, in view of these adverse circumstances, works with greater vigour than ever, and hastens to equip his twelve selected disciples for their mission to the yet unvisited parts of Galilee, where the enemies of "the kingdom" have perhaps not yet shown their faces.

The apostles are to address themselves only to the people of Israel, and are assured that when their work is accomplished, the Messiah will be revealed. "Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And on another occasion he said, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If neither of these utterances had been recorded, it would still have to be understood that the object of their mission, as it was that of Jesus, and had been John's, was to prepare *the people of Israel* for their promised King.

And when the preparation is completed, that the king should be given follows as a matter of course, and thus it is we must regard Matt. x. 23 as placed in the right connection, "Ye will not have gone through the cities of Israel till [the Son of man] be come." To the authors of the Gospels "Son of man" was synonymous with "Messiah," and Jesus here doubtless meant the Messiah, but by what designation he referred to him cannot now be known, since verbal accuracy cannot be predicated of either of the Gospels.

The apostles are to explain to the people, disappointed of their expectation of seeing the great Nazarene prophet, that they also are prophets, bringing the same divine message as that brought by Jesus of Nazareth; that they

come straight from himself; and if their hearers accept the message as from God* the same salvation, bodily and spiritual, would accompany belief of the "good tidings."

A place of reunion is presumed to be appointed at the northern extremity of Palestine, Jesus, in the mean time, continuing his work alone.

We have every reason to think that, at this period, the reaction spoken of before was almost complete, and that apathy had succeeded to excitement, so that even the places now for the first time visited were moved only by curiosity to behold a renowned prophet, and to see some wonder performed; and thus there appear to have been no results worth recording of the mission of the apostles.

But they, however, are expecting a crisis on their way to Cæsarea Philippi, for is not the King to be now revealed? Who more worthy to be that King than their beloved and revered teacher?

Jesus, too, on his way to the place of reunion, is aware that they will expect the revelation of the Messiah. He believed that the forerunner of the Messiah had already appeared in the person of John; also, that special divine agency had been at work in the events of his own ministry; he scanned the "signs of the times," the tokens that the Messianic era had commenced. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you." His faith, then, remained firm that the King was soon to be shown.

He believed, too, that the greatest in the kingdom (*i.e.* the king) would be he who had least sought his own glory, who had most heartily sought to serve the people; in short, that the worthiest would be anointed. No one, then, who had remained hidden when God had demanded

* Jesus regarded them as inspired men; see Matt. x. 20, "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."

labourers could be destined for the august position; and of those known to Jesus, who was there whom he, for a moment, could imagine invested with the regal dignity? Jesus himself was now already the actual head of the children of the kingdom. He knows that he has humbled himself, has resolutely thrust away the thought; so at length the conviction has surrounded him, and has insisted on an entrance into his consciousness—the conviction that himself is destined to be the King of Israel; it has, indeed, effected an entrance, since it was impossible to guard all avenues at once. On his coming, then, to the question "Who will be revealed as Messiah?" he finds it as an open secret, which, however, he shares with the Father alone, that it will be himself and no other.

But, can he rejoice in this? Alas! we cannot now suppose him to do so. For "darkness has again overspread the land, and gross darkness the people"—the spiritual dulness of indifference—and even of those who were washed many have returned to their "wallowing in the mire." The king, then, will have to execute the vengeance of God on the wicked, unless God, by fire from heaven, should do the dreadful work himself. And yet Jesus thinks that many would repent and turn to God if only their senses could be exercised to discern good and evil; if the Gospel was so presented to them as to arouse their interest; if the "kingdom of heaven" were described to them allegorically, by a series of sensible images, parables, tales as to children; and if a lesson were taken also from John, whose preaching was so effective, by working on their fears, pointing to the fiery destruction awaiting the impenitent! Yes, there is still hope for many if the Father will yet again postpone the day of vengeance. Three attempts have already been made to win them: 1st, by the law and the prophets; 2nd, by John; and 3rd, by Jesus and his apostles; but, Father,

grant me one more trial; let them alone this season also, that my new method may be tried; if that fail, then alas! thy judgments must be accomplished.*

And now the meeting takes place at Cæsarea Philippi, and the first greetings and inquiries presumably over, the subject in all their thoughts is introduced by Jesus, who asks what the people—the favourably disposed—say of himself as to his rank or office in relation to the kingdom; and is informed by the returned disciples that some regard him as John the Baptist risen from the dead, others think him Isaiah or one of the old prophets come alive again, while others view him simply as a prophet. None suppose him to be Messiah; hence we are confirmed in our assumption that he had never announced himself, nor had he ever been proclaimed by his apostles, in that character.

He then asks the twelve their opinion, whereupon Simon, without hesitation, exclaims, "Thou art the Anointed." Jesus regards this utterance as that of a prophet speaking by divine revelation, since, as he virtually tells him, he himself has never divulged the fact. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

All this is in accordance with what we have seen of Jesus hitherto; and, as might have been expected, he, knowing that his powers have not yet been conferred, enjoins strict silence on the subject in their intercourse with others, doubtless showing the reason for delay by giving the parable of the barren fig tree, and explaining its relation to his own future action.

They thus return to Capernaum, and Jesus recommences his work by preaching of the kingdom through a series of similitudes. The parables confirm the view herein taken of the Galilean reaction, and that of the attitude of Jesus in reference to the Messiahship. He now begins to

* See Luke xiii. 6–9.

speak enigmatically of himself to the people, only explaining his meaning to the twelve.

We may presume that some interest was reawakened for a time, but the new preaching produced no permanent result on any large scale; and the marvellous conversions, bodily and spiritual, having ceased almost or altogether, a dull apathy took possession of the people, out of which some plunged recklessly into vice, and others were animated by fierce resentment, both against John and Jesus as false prophets, the machinations of the Pharisaic party doubtless largely contributing to fan this flame.

This wholesale backsliding of the people is naturally very dispiriting to Jesus, the glorious work thus becoming undone. Therefore, in view of the terrible judgments which he, as Messiah, may be called on to execute, it is no wonder that "a sadness, as of piled mountains," comes upon him. The wickedness of the people of the lake district, considering what they have seen and experienced of the mighty power of God and his goodness, seems to him something unparalleled, and, upbraiding them because of it, he predicts fearful retribution.

But what, then, is next to be done? During the short winter, Jesus may perhaps, spending it at Capernaum, occasionally visit the neighbouring towns and villages. And, his prophetic mission having failed to win to righteousness the masses of the people, he gives himself to teaching his acknowledged disciples (a larger group than the selected apostles); also to prayer, and the searching the writings of the prophets, for light as to his future procedure.

He can hardly have remained in perplexity as to his next step, for the "good tidings" have to be preached in Jerusalem; and though its inhabitants went out in great crowds to the Baptist, it does not appear that he ever preached in the holy city itself.

But for Jesus to enter that stronghold of his adversaries is like marching into a den of lions. He feels assured that the rulers will condemn him to death as a false prophet and perverter of the people from the law.* It appears, indeed, that Jesus held a very decided opinion as to the propensity of the Jerusalemites to persecute and even to kill the prophets sent to them; but space forbids the entering here on the question of the probable origin of this conviction.

But, it may be asked, how is the apprehension of Jesus' death at Jerusalem consistent with his belief in his future Messiahship? Because he believes that men are unable to kill the soul, or to prevent the accomplishment of any divine purpose, whereas God can both slay and make alive again; and because he believes the righteous dead are, in reality, yet alive before Him.

It will, however, be highly important to Jesus to know what God has revealed on this subject by his servants the prophets. Isaiah speaks of him who carries the "good tidings" to Jerusalem (especially lii. 7). This, then, is the probable starting-point of Jesus' fresh inquiry as to the Messianic prophecies, an inquiry demanded by the situation of affairs, while the fact of its having been made is confirmed by a visible alteration in the subject-matter of his teaching.

The prophet of Nazareth is naturally led on to study the succeeding chapters in Isaiah, which now seem to him to portray the Messiah suffering, even to death, because of the sins of the people. His after-triumph also is depicted, which therefore implies a resurrection. These new thoughts must, sooner or later, suggest Daniel vii. 13, where one "like a son of man" comes with the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom from God. The kingdom has to be

* See Deut. xviii. 20–22, and xiii. 1–5.

postponed, then, till after the death and resurrection of the Messiah-elect.

Does Jesus attempt to reconcile these portions of Scripture with the Messianic predictions he has presumably relied on hitherto, or will the differences trouble him at a later period? We incline to the latter view.

On hinting these strange matters to the disciples, the Master finds them resolutely set against the idea of his death by violence at Jerusalem; Peter especially comes in aid of "the devil" to persuade Jesus to relinquish it, since it gives the death-blow to his own ambitious hopes. It seems the expectation of their Master's elevation to the throne of Israel had caused the minds of the apostles to run on the honours—the rank—to which themselves will be raised in the new kingdom. Much of Jesus' teaching henceforth is directed to the discouragement of such hopes, and of all self-seeking, lest they fail to enter the kingdom at all.

The Pharisees, on hearing of the intended departure for Jerusalem, bestir themselves to find some still more definite ground of accusation against him, and succeed, perhaps beyond their hopes, for they see that the prophet of Nazareth, by asserting that meats are not spiritually defiling, not only implies the untruth of the contrary statement in the written law, thus "blaspheming Moses and God," but by such teaching he incites to the actual breach of the laws concerning clean and unclean meats, and therefore, as we saw from Deuteronomy, is guilty of a capital crime in leading the people "out of the way wherein God had commanded them to walk."

On the other hand, many persons bring their children to Jesus, that, before leaving Galilee, he may place his hands on their heads, and ask a blessing on them.

The journey to Jerusalem is not made by the most

direct route through Samaria, but on the eastern side of Jordan, through Perea. Jesus is accompanied by many disciples other than the twelve; and among the former also the news of his expected Messiahship has spread, as is shown by the fact that the mother of James and John tries to bespeak the highest places in the kingdom for her two sons.

But the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as Messiah—is this to be accepted as a fact? And if so, how is it consistent with the theory hitherto maintained by the present writer, that Jesus did not regard himself as already Messiah, but only as the Messiah-elect?

To this supposed question the writer of these pages replies—that he does accept the narrative of the entry, but that he does so in the light of all the known antecedents. He has already represented Jesus as searching the prophets for light as to his own procedure, and it would be surprising indeed if his knowledge of Scripture had not up to the time of the entry caused him to hit on or to recollect Zech. ix. 9, "Rejoice greatly, daughter Ssion, shout, daughter Jerusalem: behold thy king will come to thee, come righteous and victorious, lowly riding upon the ass, and upon the young she-ass's foal."* He would, in all probability, regard this as a prediction of the manner of his own entry, and, as it would seem, a manner perfectly consistent with the preservation of his own *incognito*, for how common a mode of travelling was riding upon the ass! We must suppose, then, that Jesus felt it incumbent on him to enter Jerusalem on an ass, and, recalling the passage to his foremost disciples, that he sent them on to hire an animal for the purpose, that the divine direction might be obeyed. Thus the apostles were allowed to attach a significance to the act which the people could not have done.

* Translated from Ewald, see T.T.F.L., vol. ix. p. 310.

But the three disciples, with more zeal than discretion, determine to bring about a complete fulfilment of the passage Jesus has quoted, even going, in their excitement, counter to their Master's former commands, by instructing a number of children and youths to greet the arrival of the company by shouts equivalent to "Long live the King." They also, on their return, inform the other disciples, and when the suburbs of the city are approached, and the children commence shouting, the great body of disciples, in a sudden outburst of enthusiasm, immediately improvise a triumphal entry, to the astonishment, it may be presumed, of Jesus himself; unless, from the fact of its being a literal fulfilment of prophecy, he imputes their shouts to divine inspiration—as, indeed, it will appear in the sequel that he did.

A great crowd accompanies him to the temple, where he acts with a prophet's authority in denouncing the noisy trafficking by which the quiet of the temple courts is destroyed, a hint to the enthusiastic disciples sufficing for the speedy removal of the offenders, with their stock-in-trade. These bewildered persons doubtless appeal to the temple authorities, who regard, however, the shouts of the young as the matter most deserving attention. They accordingly ask if he is aware of the dangerous nature of the cries. Jesus, somewhat enigmatically, indicates his belief that the children are inspired with wisdom from above.

The temple authorities perhaps understand that he disclaims any responsibility for the children's utterances, though regarding them with complacency; at any rate, they can do nothing in the face of so many adherents, and the prophet retires without molestation.

But, as the demeanour of Jesus may point to a design on the throne, the chief priests (mostly Sadducees) consult with the leading Pharisees, who will gladly seek occasion to

embroil him with the Roman power, though the reports of their emissaries have not caused them to suspect the slightest tendency to sedition, or to any usurpation of regal authority. Both parties, however, agree to bring the question to an issue without delay, and accordingly the next day, on Jesus' appearance at the temple, they demanded to know the extent of his claim to act with authority.

The Nazarene prophet, who had probably, in the mean time, learned the mundane origin of the shouts of the young people, falls back on his former reticent course, and impales his opponents on the horns of a dilemma by asking their belief concerning the Baptist; for, Jesus' own preaching being founded on John's, any attempt to show the imminence of the divine kingdom to those who did not acknowledge the prophetic function of John would have proved utterly useless.

Jesus' enemies are baffled for the present, but determine closely to watch him and his disciples, so that any attempt at insurrection may be crushed in the bud (after obtaining sufficient evidence of a conspiracy, should a plot be in existence); but it may be presumed that, after hearing all that the Pharisees have to say against Jesus, which,—though it might have included a charge of sabbath-breaking and of inciting to general disobedience of even the *written* law of Moses—yet could have included no charge of undue self-exaltation beyond that of falsely, as they deem, assuming the prophetic character, they therefore do not really think he aims at the throne. That is to say, unless Judas had already enlightened them as to Jesus' anticipations of Messiahship; for this, sooner or later, he must be presumed to have done, and, it is reasonable to conclude, in this his betrayal of Jesus consisted, for it can scarcely be conceived that the prophet of Nazareth, prepared for death as he was, at last

attempted to conceal himself, or that he *could* have done so with any chance of success.

His adversaries attempt, in the matter of the tribute, to force him between Scylla and Charybdis, but he finds another path, a continuation of his own simple, straightforward course.

The messenger of the "good tidings," having announced them as he found opportunity, finds the leading people utterly steeled against them; he accordingly exercises the prophetic function of rebuke, and this in the hearing of the people, comparing the Pharisees with the worst of sinners, and, these having repented, to the disadvantage of those would-be holy men. This he does by parables, whose point is easily seen; and he goes on to predict that they will proceed to yet greater lengths in their wicked opposition to the Spirit of God.

The hopes which Jesus, at least during his entry, would have entertained are disappointed. Many circumstances, which could be detailed did space permit, combine to sadden him, and to "choke the word" almost before its utterance, "so that it becometh unfruitful." Plainly, there were scarcely any cases, either of conversion or of bodily healing, if, indeed, a single one was apparent. The interruptions to which he was subjected, and the discussions into which he was drawn, though he never failed to come off victorious, must have greatly contributed to the disheartening result.

As it became increasingly difficult to make an impression on Jerusalem, Jesus at length despaired of doing so, and laid the blame at the door of the scribes and Pharisees, who would not enter the kingdom themselves, and hindered the people from entering. He accordingly summoned all his righteous indignation, and directed against them an indiscriminating volley of rebuke and denunciation.

Although angry, and, in condemning the Pharisees *without distinction*, decidedly unjust, he yet sinned not, for he spoke from an unselfish impulse, and believed he was doing God service.

He must have known that he was sealing his own fate, and he accordingly withdraws from the city to prepare his disciples for the inevitable event.

It may be presumed that they search the Scriptures together, and that, in respect to the Messiah's appearing, the diverse representations therein cause much perplexity, which, after the incessant friction of the conflict in Jerusalem, exercises a depressing influence on Jesus, so that at times, though he has sought light and guidance, he has no clear outlook, and even feels God-forsaken.

He sorrows also for the fate of Jerusalem, and doubtless tries to avert it by prayer, as before, "making intercession for the transgressors." He settles at last to the belief which he entertained in Capernaum, at the time of his resolve to visit Jerusalem, viz. that his death is necessary to the fulfilment of Scripture, and that he will therefore come from heaven as Messiah. Jerusalem must suffer terribly for her rejection of the Messianic salvation; accordingly, though Jesus, having been already more than once mistaken as to the time of the divine revelation of the Messiah, cannot now tell when it will take place, yet it must necessarily come during the generation then existing, in order that the punishment may fall on those personally guilty; for the children shall no more be punished, as believed of old, for the sins of their fathers.

Jesus doubtless takes refuge in God, and comforts himself with the thought that whatever happens the Divine Will is to be done, and eventually, therefore, the best conceivable, even by God, will be done by him, to whom all things are possible.

His teaching now presents some new features, being carefully adapted to the anticipated circumstances of the near future.

A female disciple, probably feeling herself called on as a prophetess to anoint Jesus, as Samuel anointed David, for the future throne, is rebuked by the disciples for the objectless waste. Jesus, however, makes use of the incident to connect the two ideas of his death and Messiahship, which have seemed to the apostles incongruous. He commands them to mention the circumstance, whenever they preach the "good tidings," to the Jews dispersed throughout the world, that the woman might be honoured as the first who accepted the two ideas, and that they themselves may be led, notwithstanding Jesus' death, to look for his reappearing.

At the Passover feast the same desire possesses Jesus, viz. to prevent his death from destroying their belief in his future Messiahship, for if they gave up this, they would probably lose faith in the near advent of any Messiah, and, like the mass of the Galileans, relapse into indifference and even sin; and, the Passover blood suggesting the ratification of the old covenant, Jesus hits on the idea of presenting his own blood as in a similar relation to the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah, wherein for the outward law shall be substituted the law within. The words of the Passover ceremonial suggest also the form to be adopted in this new institution, temporary though it was, being intended to show the necessary connection between his death and Messiahship, *until his return*, *within that generation*, to establish the new covenant. As the Messiah must come with the clouds of heaven, it is necessary that he first go thither, and by the gate of death, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, and that, as they also declare, his blood may be a ransom for many, and the new covenant ratified therewith. Thus, besides being a loving act of remembrance of their

Teacher, the Eucharist was designed to embody the ideas above given, and to perpetuate their faith in his Messiahship, and keep alive their expectation of seeing him again. That he will rise from the dead is a matter of course, since he has already taught them that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and generally the righteous dead, are raised up (in spirit, not in the former body—*that* men or worms *can* destroy) and continue alive in the presence of God.

As for the fact of the establishment of the Holy Supper, that is confirmed by stronger external evidence than any other portion of Jesus' teaching.

The adversaries of the Nazarene can have no difficulty in obtaining testimony sufficient for his condemnation to death as "a corrupter" and false prophet; and they can ascertain by direct questioning (as, doubtless, Judas has assured them) that he believes himself the Messiah, or destined to become such. Hence they hope to procure his death at the hands of the Roman governor, as a pretender to the throne.

Although there is some ground for doubting whether Jesus actually died on the cross, it is in a high degree probable that he did so die; the former alternative, indeed, could only be reasonably held by those who believe there is valid evidence of his having been seen alive in body after his crucifixion.

Having thus given, in outline, a sketch of the career of the Nazarene, with special reference to the Messiahship, the necessary inferences to be drawn therefrom may be glanced at.

We say, then:—

1. Jesus never taught, openly or secretly, that he was already the Messiah, nor exacted from his disciples any acknowledgment of himself as such.

2. He did, towards the close of his career, teach an inner circle of disciples (the twelve) that, after his death and

ascension to heaven, he should reappear on earth to reign as Messiah, before the generation then living had passed away.

3. Since the event showed that in this anticipation he was mistaken, his personal connection with Christianity ends with this admission.

4. True Christians, however, are those who refuse to admit that he was mistaken in any of his anticipations, who either affirm that he did come as he predicted, having already explained away the prediction; or that he will yet come, in this case explaining away the limit of time; both agreeing that he now reigns in heaven: but for neither of these phases of Messianic (Christian) belief is Jesus of Nazareth in any degree responsible. His relationship to Christianity, properly so called, that is, to dogmatic Christianity, is assuredly not that of founder, since it had no existence till after his death.

5. The originator of the movement that ran on into Christianity was not Jesus, but John the Baptist.

6. As the main subject of Jesus' teaching is clearly separable from actual miracle, *i.e.* action apparently preternatural,—though he doubtless believed such action to be, through the Spirit of God, going on around him, and largely through his own instrumentality,—it is evident that no ground is afforded us for believing that he ever wrought any, or that he was ever the subject of miraculous action, unless his resurrection be proved, in which case a door will have been opened wide enough to admit other miracles on evidence else totally insufficient.

7. The whole career of Jesus is only explainable on the assumption that he felt himself destitute of any miraculous power over nature, other than that which resulted in the cure of bodily or spiritual disease, when supplied with the necessary leverage by the faith of the subjects thereof.

8. As to character, that of the Nazarene was in the first rank of human excellence, but his goodness can be reckoned superhuman only by those who are unable to free themselves from dogmatic prepossessions.

The foregoing or similar conclusions must follow from any well-considered survey of the life and work of the prophet of Nazareth; but before pronouncing finally on the claims of Christianity, it is necessary to consider the evidence for the resurrection, and for Paul's claim to have received a supernatural revelation of Jesus' Messiahship. The testimony of Paul to the resurrection of Jesus should be first examined, and the presumption in its favour dispelled. The accounts in Acts should be shown (as has indeed often been done, but all the leading points had better be presented together) to contradict one another; and it should be shown further that, if they were received, they should not lead to belief in the actual bodily reappearance of Jesus. Moreover, it would be difficult to prove that the Acts is entitled to belief as a veracious chronicle of events. Paul might be shown to have believed in an apparition of Jesus, or in the appearance of the real Jesus to himself, though not clothed in flesh and blood. He could hardly have thought that Jesus ate and drank after his resurrection, seeing that, as the prototype of believers, he was raised a spiritual body, changed in the act of rising. But, by his own showing, Paul was not in a state to distinguish between reality and imagination, for whether he was himself in the body or out of it he could not tell, and, moreover, he gives no details. Paul's direct testimony, therefore, amounts, as evidence, to zero.

There is no ground for supposing that he regarded the other appearances of Jesus as materially different from that to himself, and a comparison of his statements, with those of the Gospels, would show that there was *no fixed tradition*

on the subject, so that what he tells the Corinthians may be regarded as mere rumour, accepted by him as fact, because he has already, on other grounds, as should be subsequently made plain, believed both in Jesus' Messiahship and resurrection.

The accounts in Matthew and Luke are incompatible with each other, mutually destructive, though each is throughout self-consistent.

Thus, the idea of the actuality of the resurrection of Jesus must be finally discarded by sober inquirers into historic fact, the accounts of the supernatural origin of Christianity being shown to be incredible.

There is, however, a probability that some of the disciples believed they had seen Jesus, and this was, most likely, the case with Peter.

Peter, being the most prominent of the disciples of Jesus, it might be well, if space allowed, to endeavour to look at the questions of the Messiahship and resurrection from his point of view, and to possess the reader of Peter's stand-point after the crucifixion, on the assumption of the truth of his denial, after the arrest, of all knowledge of Jesus. We can here but briefly glance at the issue. Repentance re-establishes faith in the Messiahship, and leads Peter, therefore, to accept the teaching of the Master respecting his death (now a fact) and resurrection—a spiritual one, as aforesaid. Perhaps the reported absence of the body produces a belief in his bodily resurrection also.*

* The body of Jesus had probably been secretly taken by one or more of the most malignant of his Pharisaic enemies, in revenge for his denunciation on them of the fires of Gehenna, and subjected to the same consuming influences, the assistance of Gentile soldiers being doubtless obtainable. This, on the assumption that the body was found missing, though, after all, it may be that no other than a spiritual resurrection was thought of for many years.

By prayer and fasting Peter seeks forgiveness, and longs for a sight of the risen Messiah.

Does Jesus "appear to him in a dream," or did Peter see a figure, induced by long fasting, and conclude it to be the beloved Teacher "in another form"?

The experiences of many of the other disciples are, in some respects, similar to those of Peter, though, perhaps, they feel with less intensity. All have returned to Galilee, to their former avocations; but the new ideas working in them are kept alive by frequently searching the Scriptures, some parts of which (as Isa. liii.) they now read in another light than formerly. They doubtless, also, by prayer seek guidance as to the exercise of their evangelic functions.

A few of them, meeting together, each gets his faith confirmed by the rest,—by their varied experiences, and the results of their Scriptural researches,—and they determine to assemble in Jerusalem at the next Pentecost, and there await the reappearing of Jesus, calling together all the disciples they can muster, and partaking of the bread and wine in the manner directed by him.

This meeting accordingly takes place, and an immense enthusiasm is generated by their recollections of Jesus, and the evidences, many and various, proving to their entire satisfaction the truth of his teaching respecting himself and the necessary connection of his death, Messiahship, and the establishment of the new covenant on his appearing. Their high-wrought feeling is accepted as an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, made by Jesus himself as Messiah from heaven; and the announcement (by Peter?) of this conviction causes such an ebullition that in some the organs of articulation are hysterically affected, and there ensues a babblement which is regarded as the enforced utterances of the Holy Spirit—a speaking in strange tongues.

It is not long before the disciples, with the apostles at their head (the number twelve having again been completed), institute a new baptism, to which those are admitted who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. It is conferred, therefore, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and with special reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to be immediately looked for by each subject, if not already received on believing.

If the "Spirit" was not consciously received at baptism, nor at the Holy Communion, special means would be resorted to, as by the apostles laying hands on the heads of the neophytes and praying for the Holy Spirit, or by uttering a formula, such as "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

It is probable that few who believed in the forgiveness of all their past sins through the mediation of Jesus failed to experience unusual emotion.

Since the death of the Messiah was necessary for the fulfilment of Scripture, and that he might come from heaven to establish the new covenant ratified by his blood, those who condemned him might be regarded simply as unconscious instruments employed by God to effect his divine purposes; there need therefore be no reviling.

The apostles did not see, as Jesus did, the defects in the law, so, as they had been advised by him not to spend their strength in attacking any portion thereof, they will, when summoned before the authorities for examination, have no difficulty in convincing these authorities of the harmlessness of their teaching in reference thereto.

As to their regarding the crucified Jesus as the Messiah, and expecting his return from heaven, the belief is a guarantee that they will keep quiet till that event takes place; and it may be left to time to undeceive them. Such, at any rate, is the counsel that would be given by any politic Gamaliel. We can hardly imagine the disciples

regarded as other than poor dupes, and the utmost stretch of authority we should expect would be the issuing of a proclamation forbidding them to preach in public places.

As to the reception by the people of the new version of the "good tidings," which may be termed Nazarenism, the distinguishing tenets of a new Jewish sect, reserving the term Christianity for the world-religion subsequently propagated by persons outside the circle of the original apostles, it can only be wondered that so few, comparatively, became believers, considering that the masses regarded John as a prophet, and that the only way to avoid the admission of the total failure of his predictions was by the acceptance of the new teaching, which pointed to, at least, a partial fulfilment.

It might be supposed that, among the disciples, some would be found clear-sighted enough to understand the real attitude of Jesus towards the law, and with sufficient resolution to tread in his steps. These would be likely to esteem "the outpouring of the Spirit" as the sign and seal of the establishment of "the new covenant" and the abolition of the old; while the others regarded this change of "covenant" as postponed till Jesus' appearing, and probably thought it prudent to observe silence on the dangerous topic.

The leader of the more "advanced" party was Stephen, who is acknowledged by all to have been a real historical person; and against the party headed by him a fierce persecution was directed. The Stephenite section appears to have included none of the twelve apostles, who had determined on pursuing the safer course, being now, as heretofore, specially mindful of the temporalities.

That the *foremost* apostles chose this course is not only virtually stated by the "Acts," but is entirely confirmed by Paul; and, indeed, we find their justification for so doing in the first two Gospels. The other apostles, being presumably

commonplace persons who have left no distinct mark on the history, would be still less likely to go out of the beaten track.

The persecutions, in which one Saul or Paul was an active agent, seem to have had the effect of entirely rooting out from Jerusalem the anti-legal party, or of reducing any remnants thereof to utter silence.

The apostles appear to have remained quietly in Jerusalem for some fifteen years (perhaps contenting themselves with preaching, as they could, to such of the dispersed Jews as came to the feasts), one of their number, James, the son of Zebedee, having been, according to the Acts, put to death, for some unstated reason, by Herod.

One of the brothers of Jesus, also named James, having become a believer, seems to have been elected to fill a gap in the apostolic body, and he eventually rises to the head of affairs, relegating Peter to the second place, John keeping his original position.

When Paul, who had been converted (of which more hereafter), at length appeared in Jerusalem, stating what success God had granted him among the Gentiles without the law, the apostles James, Kepha (Peter), and John, the recognized pillars of the new community, gave him the right hand of fellowship, though they could not follow his example in preaching to the Gentiles, resolving rather to adhere strictly to their original instructions, received direct from the Lord.

After Peter's vacillating conduct at Antioch, and Paul's open denunciation thereof, the apostles seem to have tried to undermine the influence of Paul among his Gentile converts, even as far as Corinth; and every allusion of Paul to his difficulties arising from the interferences of the disciples of the apostles leads to the conclusion that the original apostles not only refrained throughout from preaching to

Gentiles, but were even "zealous for the law" to the end, as, according to the Acts, were all the believing Jews in Jerusalem even as late as about the year 60.

All this is just what we might have expected from Jesus' teaching, when we consider what we know from the Gospels and from Paul of the characteristics of the persons (notably Peter) to whom was entrusted the propagation of that teaching.

We conclude, then, that neither Jesus nor the apostles whom he taught ever entertained the project of founding a universal religion; and that the Jews, as a people, rejected the teaching of the apostles.

Though Baur long ago announced Paul as the true founder of the universal religion named Christianity, there are still vast numbers in this country who would be surprised to learn the fact, and as some account of that origin is included in what the present writer proposed to outline, he will now proceed with the most prominent features of the career of Paul.

Paul of Tarsus, though educated a Pharisee, was of such an intellectual rank, to say nothing of his Greek culture, that we must regard him as predisposed to receive the teaching of Jesus in regard to righteousness, and to welcome it as superior to Pharisaism, under which he often had to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!"

Starting, however, with the prejudice against Jesus derived from his instructors, his energetic nature disposed him to enter on a career of persecution of those disciples of Jesus who reproduced that teaching of their Master's which points at defects in the law.

In the course of his examinations of these disciples, and perhaps through his disputings with them, Paul would have been almost sure to become acquainted with the higher righteousness taught, and in some cases exemplified by

them. The recognition of this, when it dawned on him, became the rift within his Pharisaic lute. It also signalized the commencement of a fierce internal conflict, for the God-given law expressly declared itself irrepealable. It is a perpetual "covenant" between the Israelites and God, who designs by it to separate them for ever from the unclean Gentiles, as his peculiar people.

But yet the Scripture speaks of a "new covenant" to be made; and will not those who are cleansed by the Spirit be still more truly distinguished from the unholy Gentiles?

What! would God, then, rather that the Gentiles should remain in sin than become, under his Christ, his obedient subjects through the communication of the Holy Spirit? Nay, verily! He is the God of the Gentiles also.

This comes to Paul, not consciously by the method of logical reasoning, but it appears instead to flash on him as by revelation from heaven. He accepts it as such, and likewise the command to preach the good tidings, thus specially revealed in him, to the Gentiles.

Paul had heard of the resurrection of Jesus, and of the "blood of the new covenant," also of some other parts of Jesus' teaching, but he had not *received them* as true; now, however, the flash of the divine revelation lights them all up afresh, and he accepts the whole as revealed to him by heaven. God has revealed his Son in him. Indeed, when he contrasts the idea of the Messiah as commonly entertained by the Jews with that of the Messiahship of the crucified Jesus, he is forced to conclude that no man can believe in the latter except by the influence of the Holy Ghost.*

The great ideas that have come to him, and the vista they have opened up, conspire to raise Paul for a time to an ecstatic state, in which the glorified Messiah (as he after-

* See 1 Cor. xii. 3.

wards believed) appears to him and sends him to the Gentiles.

It is hard to conceive of this Paul subsequently instituting a calm, judicial inquiry as to the resurrection, and hunting up the witnesses thereto.

He goes straightway to the Arabians (Idumæans) and exhorts them to become true children of their great forefather, the faithful Abraham. All men are guilty, and exposed to the coming wrath, but God would not have them perish; he loves them, and has sent his Son to die that they might live; by faith in that Son they will be saved, for he has been raised again, and will impart, to those who believe, the Holy Spirit to ensure their salvation.

On returning to Damascus after three years' absence, he preaches his gospel of freedom from the law to Jews as well as Gentiles; but the former would kill him, for the same reason that the Jerusalemites killed Stephen. Paul, however, escapes to Jerusalem, and lives with Peter, presumably in hiding, for fifteen days. While there he also saw James, the brother of Jesus, but none of the other apostles. Getting away at length, he goes to the north and north-west, through Syria and Asia Minor, preaching *his* gospel, and that for many years, and with considerable success, having no communication with the original apostles.

After fourteen years he revisits Jerusalem, where his services to religion are acknowledged by the apostles. The more conservative Judaists among their converts insist, however, that the Gentile believers shall be circumcised, beginning with Titus, whom Paul had brought with him. To this Paul is intensely opposed; and eventually it is agreed that himself and the original apostles shall keep their respective spheres without interference, the only thing they ask of him being to make collections for their poor, which he willingly undertakes to do.

But, at Antioch, Paul, being incensed at the dissimulation of Peter, tells him and the emissaries of James (Peter having demanded that the Gentiles should live like the Jews), that their zeal for the law is a building again the things destroyed by the death of the Anointed, and that they thus make the cross of no effect; and he sees, plainly enough, as is evident in Peter's case, that they only act thus to avoid persecution.

Paul, therefore, keeps totally apart from the other apostles, and extends his missionary labours to Macedonia and Greece.

But everywhere he is persecuted by the Jews, where they are in sufficient strength, and sometimes even by the extreme Jew-Christians (Nazarenes), whom he terms "false brethren."

The old compact is violated by this aggressive faction, members of which probably "come from James," as at Antioch, representing Paul as no apostle, and making the old claim for the circumcision of the Gentile converts as a preliminary to their admission into the new community. They claim to speak, not in the name of James, but of the Christ. Peter is understood to take a different, probably an intermediate, position, and there are those who acknowledge the headship conferred on him by Jesus. Thus strife and division abound, and Paul's right to direct the Churches he has founded is disputed even by his own converts.

Paul finds that the "faith which bringeth salvation" often operates but very feebly towards that end. Many, though they have received the Spirit, are still carnal. But he does not allow his own faith in the present Messianic salvation to give way through the shock of this discovery; the apparently carnal have the spirit, though but in germ, and may be regarded as "babes in Christ."

His own worst moods, too (sometimes in such startling

contrast with a previous state of spiritual exaltation), he is able to account for on the assumption of their necessity for the purpose of counteracting any possible tendency to self-esteem.

Perhaps the privations and persecutions to which he is subject may be set in like manner against the spiritual gifts or powers he has received, which are, presumably, as in the case of Jesus, those of healing and the "casting out of devils," with the superadded "gift of tongues."

The anti-legal teaching of Paul might be quoted from the Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, and shown to be intended for Jews as well as Gentiles, and shown also to have been the cause of all the persecutions suffered by him, persecutions not shared by the original apostles. "And I," said Paul, "if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?" It might also be made apparent how completely the great argument of Paley, founded on the supposed "labours, dangers, and sufferings" of the original apostles, here breaks down, and even how it may be refuted from his own "Horæ Paulinæ."

Paul's intellectual rank is evidenced by his view of the subjective nature of sin; and his high moral quality is specially apparent in his counsel as to the treatment of weak brethren. His limitations are evinced in particular by his peculiar use of certain passages of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Hitherto, it has been possible to look to Paul's own letters for information as to his character and teaching and the events of his life, and the Epistle to the Romans brings us to within a year or two of his last visit to Jerusalem; but for the important events that then occurred, there is only the authority of the Acts, the largely unhistorical character of which book is now, by the most impartial critics, so generally affirmed.

But after an examination of the account in the Acts, it may be seen that the Paul therein presented differs so entirely from the Paul revealed to us in his own genuine epistles, that the unlearned reader of ordinary capacity may confirm the judgment of the best critics.

Thus the Acts represents James (who, as well as the whole Church of Jerusalem, must have known of Paul's anti-legal teaching, and his opposition to circumcision) as advising Paul to enter on a course of special legal observance, for the purpose of showing the Church (so zealous for the law) that the reports which had reached them to the effect that he had preached to the Jews freedom from circumcision and the law were altogether without foundation.

It represents Paul as accepting and acting on this advice, and thus as guilty of the very dissimulation he so condemned in Peter.

It also shows that, being recognized as the notorious apostate by the mob, he was fiercely attacked, and was in danger of losing his life till rescued by the Roman soldiery; and that afterwards, when questioned before a legal tribunal as to the cause of the uproar, he falsely (according to the Acts own showing) declares it to be on account of his own Pharisaic belief in a resurrection, and the Acts states that he did this in order to divide his opponents.

This departure from truth does not seem reprehensible to the writer of the book in question; but, therefore, we ought not to accept his statements to the detriment of Paul, statements which, in any case, would require strong additional confirmation.

By further comparison of the Paul of the Acts with the real Paul, we may see how frequent in that book are the departures from historical truth, and should conclude that it is not only to a large extent unhistorical, but that its author was, notwithstanding Pfleiderer, unveracious.

Following Paul to Rome, and glancing at the probably genuine Epistle to the Philippians, one might be led to dwell on the evangelistic work done by the mass of Christians, especially by the prophets among them—work which simply consisted in speaking of the great events which they expected shortly to transpire; for as some thirty years had elapsed since Jesus' death, the return of "the Lord from heaven" could not, they thought, much longer be delayed. The *tidings* termed *good* by the Christians would be communicated to the heathen, by whom they were surrounded, in various tones of kindly warning or vindictive threat, according to the speakers and the circumstances, *fire* being the instrument of the divine vengeance on "them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

The prophet of woe must have been often regarded as uttering a curse, and as desiring the vengeance he predicted. And when the great fire of Rome broke out in July, 64, did not some Christians, Tertullian-like, themselves break out in shouts of exultation? Hence, what more likely than that these should have been suspected of having set fire to the city?

When we consider, too, the Jewish hatred of the Paulinists, we cannot wonder that the Christians were accused to Nero as the authors of the calamity.

The dreadful persecution that ensued in Rome sank deep into the heart of one who perhaps escaped therefrom, and found a retreat in the isle of Patmos.

The Christians, after the Neronian persecution, must have daily expected the *Parousia*, or presence of their Lord, in judgment on the cruel foes of God and his saints, and many must have chafed at the delay; but now, one of the prophets, named John, the same that was in the isle of Patmos because of the persecution, is convinced that this

judgment "must shortly come to pass," and places himself, in spirit, in the very day of the Lord, the day of his fiery wrath. This prophet describes the images presented in vision to his enkindled imagination, and exults in the overthrow of the city "drunken with the blood of the saints," and in the torments to be endured by "the beast"—Nero.

Jerusalem, now in danger from the Roman armies, shall suffer, but shall not be destroyed; and eventually a new heaven and a new earth shall be created, with a new Jerusalem, built by immortal hands.

But its real founders are "the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The writer knows no Paul, or knows him only as a liar, falsely calling himself an apostle.

Yet the existing Jerusalem falls, and the unbelieving Jews who survive, disappointed of *their* Messiah, continue expecting him till the "star" sets in blood.

The Christians, having been wound up to the highest pitch of expectation, are also disappointed of the presence of their Lord; yet they, too, continue to "hope against hope" for his appearing.

Indications of this are presented in the Synoptics, but the last phase which shows itself in the New Testament may be seen in the Second Epistle of Peter (so-called). In this book, the delay, the apparent breach of the Lord's promise, is attempted to be accounted for, and the writer continues to look for his coming, though some have renounced their faith.

But, as the personal reign of the Christ on earth was so long delayed, the bishops (who "occupied" the seat of government "till he came") had been gradually organizing the Church for a perpetuity of power, which ever tended to centralize itself in Rome. Not only did the hierarchy discourage independent prophecy, but those Christians who still looked for the speedy coming of their Lord, faithful to

the original hope, found themselves in conflict with the authorities (who reigned in his stead), and were at length cast out of the Church as heretics.

It should also be shown how that a similar fate overtook those who made the following of the original apostles, in another matter, their chief concern. These were the Nazarenes, who kept to the ancient way, refusing both to acknowledge the authority of the Pauline epistles, and to accept as brethren the Gentiles who ate the flesh of unclean beasts.

With the gradual decline of these two (eventually) heretical sects perished the Christianity, or rather Nazarenism, of the apostles proper.

Thus, the Acts having been written, closing the gulf that had yawned between Paul and James, the Catholic Church, in various ways, triumphed at the expense of truth, which, especially in the literature of the age, became disregarded to an unparalleled extent.

In passing, two or three of the Epistles might be glanced at, notably that of James, showing, but by no means for the first time, that it attacks the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith.

A few pages would, perhaps, be necessary in order to define Christianity, and to remove misconceptions as to what dogmas properly constitute it.

As the term is used in many senses, and as there is no universally accepted definition thereof, its proper meaning should be fixed by the etymology showing its original signification.

The title "Christ" is misused when treated as another name of Jesus, seeing, moreover, that he probably never even heard the word pronounced.

The fundamental and only essential doctrine of Christianity is that which asserts Jesus to be the Christ. A

Christian, then, properly is one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy. Thus "Christianity" and "Christian dogma" are equivalent expressions.

It follows that, as Jesus of Nazareth never taught he was the Messiah (Christ), his teaching was something apart from Christianity; it is, in truth, the purest theism of the Hebrew Scriptures, conjoined with their sublimest morality.

Having now indicated the main lines of an inquiry respecting Jesus and Christianity, it might be well to point the moral, and show the practical tendency of an investigation which has led, in regard to the whole of Christian dogma, to an unequivocably negative conclusion.

There are who say, more or less distinctly, that Christianity, whether true or not, must be assumed to be true, and taught as true, otherwise the masses of the people will be reduced to a state of moral chaos; others there are, and these more numerous, who speak as if to disprove the truth of dogmatic Christianity were to take the sun from the sky, the sunshine of hope from the heart.

In order, then, to dispel these illusions, it might be wise to devote a chapter to the working of dogmatic Christianity, both in the past history of Christendom and at the present time.

Christianity, as a dogmatic system, being founded on the sole doctrine that Jesus is the Christ, then, since the negative of that doctrine is true, it follows that Christianity, properly so called, has no foundation in truth.

As the Messiah-King of Israel, predicted by the Hebrew prophets, never has appeared, and never can appear, it follows, again, that no miracles were wrought in evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was this Messiah. Historical inquiry *thus* excludes the idea of supernatural revelation.

But modern apologists supply us with a "short and easy method" of believing therein.

We have but to presuppose that Jesus was preternaturally sinless, and, after the study of his life, to cling to this belief (ignoring the want of evidence, and the counter-evidence presented by the baptism, and by Jesus' reply to him who addressed him as "Good Master"), and no further difficulty will be presented by the miracles. A door will have been opened wide enough for them all to enter.

The generation or two which clung to Christianity in spite of the non-appearance of the Christ,—which had mournfully to confess that "the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth," notwithstanding God's declaration by Ezekiel that this should not be so again, yet which acquitted the Almighty of breach of promise on the ground that he must not be expected to fulfil his promises in the sense in which he caused them to be understood,—these generations had received a lesson adverse to literal veracity, and they were not slow to make practical application thereof. Thus we need not wonder at the forgeries which abounded in the second century.

The influence of (dogmatic) Christianity may be shown to have continued adverse to truthfulness, shown most clearly in the history of the Catholic Church, its martyrology notwithstanding.

The evil influence of Christian dogma is also apparent in the intolerance it has ever, till of late, fostered. The germs, therefore, are in the New Testament, and should be brought to the reader's notice. Mature Christianity said—Believe, or suffer eternally the torments of hell. As one untruth necessitated another, Christianity is responsible for the frightful dogma of eternal punishment, a dogma which, standing alone, is a great evil; but when such punishment was threatened as above, as the alternative of belief, the

dogma led, as Mr. Lecky shows, to the most unrelenting persecutions.

A phase of Christianity is *Calvinism*, as we see it in the Westminster Confession of Faith, a quotation or two from which might not be amiss.

The history of the world shows that the Christian doctrine of the work of the Holy Ghost is unsupported by evidence, is a work which leaves no trace, as the state of heathendom as well as of Christendom has always testified.

The Christianity of the present day, tempered as it is by modern influences, is yet obstructive of the progress of mankind. Whether we glance at the Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, or any of the Protestant sects, the impediments it presents are more or less apparent. Here it is in conflict with the state to defend its usurped dominion over mankind, there it obscures the teaching of Jesus by a multitude of ceremonial observances. The evangelical doctrine of justification by faith may be shown (by the admissions of prominent evangelicals) to be obstructive of the progress of righteousness. Instead of promoting righteousness—*i.e.* moral goodness, virtue, nobility of character—*which should be the one aim of all Churches*, attention is very frequently concentrated on other subjects, and apparently directed to other objects or aims, as, for instance, presentation of doctrine; learned explanation of an ancient religious literature, and the defence of Christianity itself, ever becoming a more difficult task.

On the other hand, Christianity has conferred great benefits on mankind—benefits, however, which may be retained, though itself be rejected.

We owe to it the New Testament, and therefore our knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus. This volume contains also many excellent things not directly traceable to the Nazarene. We owe to Christianity also, as long ago

remarked by Emerson, two institutions, which may be made increasingly useful, those (viz.) of preaching and the Sunday rest.

It may thus be shown that, though Christianity proper be destroyed, the general teaching of the prophet of Nazareth may be preserved intact (or only modified by the advance of science), and the Churches not only preserved, but rendered far more efficacious for their true ends. It may be shown how the "Jesus of history" differs from the Jesus of Christianity, and how the former may be the better honoured and followed by rejecting the latter; also by not placing his name on a sectarian banner, but by equally honouring and following truth, justice, love, and purity, whether found in him or in others, according to the degree of each.

Thus a work produced on the lines above traced may contribute towards clearing the path of the universal Church of the future, for the unobstructed pursuit of righteousness.

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